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The Gambler Guardian's Double Deal.

BY MAJOR DANGERFIELD BURR.



ONE OF THE TWO REMAINED STANDING, EVIDENTLY UNHARMED, GAZING ALMOST UNCONCERNEDLY AT THE SCENE BEFORE HIM.

THE Gambler-Guardian's Double Deal;

OR,

The Shadow Scourger's Compact

A Thrilling Story of the Millionaire
Miner's Revenge.

BY MAJ. DANGERFIELD BURR.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESPERADO'S ESCAPE.

Along a border trail in the far West a horseman was riding one afternoon, when, as he entered a heavy forest, he was startled by shots ringing out rapidly not very far ahead.

The horseman, well knowing that he was in a dangerous locality, where human life was held cheap, spurred forward rapidly, drawing a revolver from beneath his sack coat as he did so.

Over a low ridge he went, to suddenly dash upon a spirited scene.

A horse, saddled and bridled, lay dead in the trail that wound around the ridge, and, with his back against a tree, uprooted by a recent storm, a man was standing, fighting off, with drawn knife, two men who were attacking him, also with drawn weapons, while a third man lay dead a few feet distant.

"Help me, comrade, for these men would kill and rob me!" cried the one at bay, as he beheld the horseman.

Though the two men were also armed with revolvers, they had not used them, but now, alarmed at the horseman's coming, they quickly turned upon the newcomer and opened fire.

Down went his horse, shot through the head, but the rider was upon his feet in an instant; a rapid firing followed, and the desperadoes went down under it.

Then the newcomer hastened to the stranger, who said faintly, as the rescuer approached:

"They attacked me, knowing I had money, but would not kill me, hoping to force more from me.

"They were desperate men, outlaws, and you have saved me—"

He reeled and fell as he spoke, and the rescuer sprang to his side.

He hastily examined his wounds, for he had received two, a bullet mark on the head, and a knife thrust in the shoulder.

Stepping to his fallen horse, the rescuer took from his saddle a small morocco case, and soon was dressing the wounds of the now insensible man.

"This is a bad one on the head, and he has lost much blood from this knife thrust in his shoulder; but, I hope he will pull through.

"Well, this is nice for me, stopped when hastening on my way to secure a place that I hoped would prove to be the foundation of my fortune; but, humanity demands the sacrifice, and I make it cheerfully."

He fully realized that he was thirty miles from the nearest habitation, with a seriously wounded man upon his hands, his horse dead, and two desperadoes to bury—not all three, for he now discovered that one he had fired upon was yet alive.

"Well, here goes to make the best of a bad bargain."

He looked about him, and saw in the distance four horses, three of them saddled, the other a pack animal.

Just beyond the ridge he had noticed, off the trail, a brook and a good shelter among the pines; so he at once went after the horses and led them all there.

Then he looked to the wounded desperado, who had a bullet in his breast.

"It is fortunate for you, my man, that I happen to be a surgeon, for I may be able to save your life," he remarked, as he probed the wound and, ere long, extracted the bullet.

"Will I die, pard? I hain't fit ter hand in my chips without a season o' prayer," said the man, piteously.

"I think you will pull through," was the curt answer, and, going over to the camp which he had selected, he soon erected a brush shelter, and with the blankets of the two dead men made a sheltered retreat.

Into this he carried the two wounded men, and made them as comfortable as possible.

The pack of the desperadoes contained much that was useful, and there were, also, ample provisions in it, so that no fear of their lacking food troubled him.

By nightfall he had his camp completed, and the two wounded men were doing as well as could be expected. He was, indeed, as tender a nurse to the desperado as to the one he had so nobly rescued.

The two ruffians who had fallen in the fight were decently buried, and such of their things as were of use were appropriated for the comfort of the other.

Thus several weeks passed, and one morning the surgeon rescuer awoke to find the desperado gone!

On his blanket was pinned a slip of paper, on which was written the following, with a lead pencil:

"Dear Pard:

"When I were a Sundry schule kid I heerd tell o' a good Sermaritan as nussed a wounded man he found by ther side o' a trail out o' Jerusalem.

"Now, you is thet good man, fer, though yer wounded me, yer was right in doin' so, as I were almin' fer your life, bein' as yer interfered with ther leelle game o' my pards and me, ter rob ther gent as you saved.

"Now, my pards hev gone, and yer buried 'em decint, and as I ar' able ter skip, I will tarry no longer, so bids you adoo, with thanks fer yer kindness.

"I takes only my own hess and weepens, leavin' you and Mister Vernon them as belonged to my pards, and ther pack animile as well.

"I has been better than you thoughted me o' late, for I hed ther idee o' leavin' without tellin' yer, as Mister Vernon may want ter hang me fer what he knows agin me, tho' he hev been friendly-like, I admit, since we hev been lyin' along side by side wounded, and we has often talked o' your goodness.

"Tell Mister Vernon adoo fer me, and now adoo to yerself, with ther hope I may some day be able ter sarve you a good turn as yer desarves.

"No more from

"Yours trooley,

"BOWIE BILL."

Such was the letter which the young surgeon read to the one whom he had rescued.

"I am glad he has gone, for I cared not to prosecute him, as I found he was not so bad as he appeared.

"He was led to do what he did by the others, I am sure, and they met their just deserts, for I had befriended them, often, in the mines.

"But, Bowie Bill, as he calls himself, told me that you were going to take a place as surgeon on a Government survey expedition, when you were detained by your goodness to me?"

"Yes, sir; I was on my way to join the expedition."

"When does it start?"

"It has gone—over two weeks ago."

"Then you lost your place?"

"That does not matter, sir, for I can return to the settlement where I had hung out my shingle as a doctor, and will do well, I dare say."

"I am sorry" and this was all that Mr. Vernon, as Bowie Bill had called him, said.

Two weeks after the rescued man was able to travel, and the now two warm friends parted at the railroad station, the young physician returning to resume his practice in the settlement, which, as

he had explained to Mr. Vernon, he had left to accept a position as surgeon of a survey expedition.

"Here is my address, sir," said Mr. Vernon, as they parted at the station, "so call upon me if I can serve you in any way, as I owe you my life, and you have made great sacrifices for me; I would only be too happy to repay my obligations, even in a small way."

The card given him read:

"Walter Vernon,

Gold Miner,

San Francisco,

California."

CHAPTER II.

THE MINER'S OFFER TO DUDLEY NORMAN.

In a country town, in the interior of the State of Maryland, a young man was seated in a small office, lost in thought.

The office was in one room of a little cottage, and a bedroom adjoining, with a diminutive kitchen and dining room beyond, showed that the occupant was not blessed with an abundance of this world's goods.

Time was when the Normans were the leading people of the town, and the old mansion on the hill had been their family home for several generations; but a wild brother of the judge had swamped the estate, and the twin brothers, Randolph and Dudley, had been left only a good education and a few hundred dollars with which to make their fortunes.

Dudley had chosen medicine, and went West to find a place in which to settle and practice.

Randolph had selected the law, and had hung out his shingle as an attorney in his native town, but with indifferent success, for the five years he had been practicing there had by no means enriched him, though rumor had it that he had led a fast life and gambled heavily, so could not lay aside much.

As he sat in his office that afternoon his face was clouded, and his muttered words revealed the reason.

"I must get money in some way, for I have lost at the gaming table every dollar of the Widow Dale's funds entrusted to me, and the heirs demand a settlement one month from to-day.

"I wonder if Dudley is able to help me, as I wrote and asked him to do—ah! here comes my mail, and I hope it brings a letter from him."

As he spoke his office boy, and, in fact, man-of-all-work, entered and handed him several letters.

He eagerly opened one and read aloud, as follows:

"Omaha, Neb.,

"Oct. 10th, 18—

"My dear Brother,

"Within you will find a draft on New York for five hundred dollars, all that I can possibly afford now, in answer to your urgent appeal, as I have been in a streak of ill fortune of late years.

"The settlement where I hoped to do well I left to take a surgeon's position in a large surveying expedition into the Rocky Mountains, which would last for a couple of years at least.

"While on my way to the starting point I had an adventure, in which I rescued a gentleman from desperadoes, and as he was badly wounded, as also was one of his assailants, I delayed for weeks to take care of them, and the result of which was that I lost my place.

"I now have a letter from the desperado, Bowie Bill, and the California gentleman, Mr. Walter Vernon, as souvenirs of my good work; but of course I would not have accepted pecuniary consideration for services rendered under the circumstances.

"I then came to the neighborhood of this town, from where my letter is headed, and have done ordinarily well; but I leave here next week to go to a mining camp in California, which a fellow-

student writes me to take off his hands, as he is to get married, and the place pays handsomely, he says, though it is far away from civilization.

"Perhaps I could lend you a helping hand some time in the future, for I will send you my address.

"I had begun to fear you wished to drop corresponding with me, and it pained me deeply, as my letters were only answered yearly.

"We are all that are left, Randolph, and drawn more closely together from being twin brothers, so do not let us lose sight of each other.

"I am glad to send you the within draft, for I do not need it, and, from your letter, you need it sadly.

"With every good wish for your prosperity, believe me, ever affectionately,

"Your brother,

"DUDLEY NORMAN."

"Five hundred, and I need five times that sum—ha! why, here is a letter for Dudley, and it is postmarked San Francisco.

"How can it have come here, since it is not even addressed in my care?

"What if it can be from the Californian his letter says he served so well.

"I am half tempted to open it—by Heaven! but I will!

"It may help me out. Who knows?

"And if it should not I can say I never noticed that it was to Dudley until I opened it, and I really do not believe the Postmaster did either.

"He merely saw the name Norman.

"Had it been our late Postmistress it would not have escaped her inquisitive eyes—nothing ever escapes the curious eyes of a woman, and if I ever get to Congress I'll bring a law before that august assemblage to prohibit women from being put in Post Offices."

He turned the letter over and over in his hands, as he talked, and then, by a sudden impulse, ran his paper cutter through the envelope.

The letter was drawn out and a check fluttered to the floor.

He eagerly seized it, and gave a low whistle as he saw that it was for five thousand dollars and payable to his brother.

Then he read the letter.

It was dated at San Francisco, one month before, and was as follows:

"My dear Doctor Norman:

"Let me recall myself to your memory by describing a scene in my life:

"A young man left his home near the city of New York, years ago, to seek his fortune in the gold fields of California.

"He was favored by fortune, and returning home to visit his kindred, found his parents dead, and, in fact, no one near or dear to him.

"The grand old family homestead, with a heavy mortgage upon it, had been left to him, that was all.

"He paid off the mortgage, married one who had been his girl sweetheart, and returned to California.

"His wife died, so he sent his only child, a daughter, to school in New York, and he was on his way to visit her, riding across country along the overland until he could strike the railroads, when he was ambushed by three men, who had followed him to get him into their power and force from him a large sum of money, for they had been in his employ and knew him well.

"He had killed one, but his fate would have been quickly sealed had not a rescuer arrived, shot one of his assailants dead, wounded the other, and thus saved his life.

"You need no more to tell you who I am, my dear Norman, and well know all that you did for me, and for my foe, too, Bowie Bill, as we lay wounded in that little frontier camp.

"I intended that you should have heard from me soon after; but a letter sent to your address was returned to me.

"Then I advertised in the New York Herald, but got no reply, so I gave it up, after sending a man to the settlement where you had been practicing, and learning that you had gone, no one there could give the slightest clue whither.

"Now to the point, my dear friend, and I address you knowing that my letter, this time, will reach you, for it flashed upon me one day that, while we were talking, you had said you were from Maryland, and mentioned your native town, where you had a brother.

"The wound I received on the head in that affair, when you came to my rescue, has given me much trouble.

"At times I seem to be dazed, and quite lose my identity, and my physician has advised that I settle up my worldly affairs while I am yet able to do so, and I take the good advice.

"I am a very rich man, my dear Norman, and I have lately had my old homestead near New York on the Hudson, fitted up, with a view of going there to end my days with my child, who is my sole heiress.

"To your care I intrust that child, making you her guardian and the executor of my estate, and my will is so made.

"I start at once for New York State, to enter an asylum, where I am to be placed under a treatment that may possibly result in my cure, though the chances are greatly against me.

"I however place in your hands full power of attorney to control my fortune, and the inheritance of my only child, Violet, now a girl of eight years of age.

"You are to have full powers, as I said, sending money for my needs, as long as I live, and using my income as though it were your own, for when Violet reached her eighteenth year, you are to divide equally between you all that I may own at that time.

"I know not exactly how your financial affairs stand, so beg you to accept the within check to square up your matters and come to New York and meet me one month from the date of this letter.

"Come at once to my old homestead of Glen Idle, for the steamer will land you within a mile of the place.

"Should the amount of the enclosed check not be sufficient for your uses, draw on me at sight for as much more through the Chemical Bank of New York; but be sure and meet me, for I wish not to delay entering the institution where I so hope for recovery.

"Ever your attached friend,

"WALTER VERNON."

Time and time again did Randolph Norman read this interesting and important letter, and then he sat in silent thought from which even the darkness of approaching night did not arouse him.

"Supper's ready, sah," said his servant, opening the door.

He sprang to his feet with an almost startled cry, and then said hoarsely:

"It is my destiny! By Heavens! but I will do it! I will take the risk, for the stake is too great to hesitate!"

CHAPTER III.

"TWO CAN PLAY AT THIS GAME."

An old stone mansion, erected before the Revolution, and added to by respective generations until its heir and last owner, Walter Vernon, had relieved it from mortgages and put upon it many improvements, Glen Idle had come to be a lordly house and most valuable estate, with its hundreds of acres around it.

With the intention of making it his home, and bringing his daughter there under a competent governess, Walter Vernon, who had dug and secured an enormous fortune out of the mines in California, had fitted Glen Idle mansion up without regard to cost, and furnished with a degree of taste and luxury that showed a refinement of nature one

would not have expected from a returned miner.

There were fine horses and vehicles in the stables, the hothouses were filled with choice plants and flowers, the gardens were all that could be desired, and blooded cattle were in the barns and pastures.

Then the home was so furnished as to leave nothing for the heart to desire, for the old and rare paintings even had been touched up and newly framed, many books added to the library, and well-trained servants secured.

And just as he expected to enjoy all this in the society of his loved daughter, Walter Vernon realized that he was not the man he had been, his head constantly pained him where he had been wounded that day on the border trail when Doctor Norman had rescued him.

He knew that he dared not trust to himself, and physicians had urged that he place himself for treatment in an asylum.

His estates were in perfect condition, his large income coming in regularly without a flaw, and there was a very large credit in bank on deposit.

It was a dangerous power to put in one man's hands. There was, however, one-half of his wealth so secured, as the property of his little daughter, that it could not be touched until she was eighteen, so that she would at least be a very rich heiress then, even were the rest of her fortune swept away.

But, what Dudley Norman had done for him, Walter Vernon knew showed that he was a man to trust, and so he wrote the letter giving him full power to act as he himself might with his vast fortune, and telling him to meet him at Glen Idle. This letter fell into the hands of Randolph Norman, the young lawyer struggling for a living in a country town, and gambling his earnings, and the money entrusted to him by others away.

Little Violet, with a competent governess, went to Glen Idle to meet her father, and they had been there but a few days when, one afternoon, the steamboat, up river bound, was seen to stand in toward the dock, a mile from the mansion.

Each day had Mr. Vernon ordered the carriage to meet the boat, expecting Dudley Norman, and this day he was not disappointed, for a visitor was seen to step from the vehicle as it rolled up to the grand stairway leading to the piazza.

Little Violet peeped at him curiously, for her father had told her all about the brave man who had saved his life, killing one desperado and wounding another to do so, and had then nursed him through long weeks of suffering.

He had told her how the doctors had ordered him, her father, to go to an institution for treatment, and that the brave gentleman, Doctor Norman, was to be her guardian.

So little had Violet really known of her own father, and she was so young, that, naturally, the change was not one of great grief to her; but she was curious to see what her "new papa" was like.

She beheld a man six feet in height, broad shouldered, splendidly formed, and with a dark, handsome face, enlivened by the brightest and most expressive eyes she had ever seen.

She even noticed that his hands and feet were small and shapely, and that he said to Buck, the coachman, as he left the carriage, in a very polite manner:

"Thank you."

Mr. Vernon met him at the door, and warmly grasped his hand.

"My dear Norman, I am so glad you have come, for I was sure my second letter could not miss you, sent to your old home. But, how well you are looking."

"I am feeling well, sir; but you certainly do not strike one as being an invalid."

"Ah, my dear friend, it is all here," and he touched the wound over his temple.

"I feel no confidence in myself, and will be glad to get away to where I can have rest and treatment.

"You understand just what you are to be to me and mine: but we will talk it all over when you come down from your room and after dinner, for I must get off to-morrow night on the boat—I dare not delay, my dear Norman."

The young man went to his room, escorted by a servant, and was charmed with all about him, and the grand view of the Hudson, which was visible in the gathering twilight.

He hastily dressed for dinner, and when he descended to the grand dining room, Violet was there to meet him.

"My little daughter Violet, Doctor Norman, who is now to be your ward and adopted child," said the Californian.

Violet was a beautiful child of eight, with great large blue eyes and long lashes shading them, until they looked almost black.

Her features were perfect and her form was the perfection of childish grace and symmetry.

A wealth of gold-red hair fell down her back in waving masses, and altogether the young heiress was very lively and very winning.

She kissed her guardian with a naivete that was very winning, and said:

"Papa has told me all about you, and I am going to be such a good little ward to you.

"Will you be a good guardian to me in place of my papa?"

"Indeed I will, Violet."

"Then we'll get along splendidly, for I can sing a little, and play on the guitar and piano, and papa says I may take lessons on the harp, and learn to draw and paint.

"Then I can ride and drive already, and you will teach me to shoot a rifle and pistol, too, won't you, for I wish to be thoroughly accomplished and learn to speak French and German, too."

The new guardian laughed heartily at his pretty ward, and seemed to be at once drawn toward her.

After dinner the two gentlemen sat in the library until midnight, and Mr. Vernon told the man he entrusted so implicitly all about his estate, just how his property was invested, how much his income was, the sums in bank, and everything that was necessary.

The next day the necessary legal papers were drawn up, and the new master of Glen Idle turned in the check sent him for five thousand dollars, which he said he had not needed.

"Well, all is in your hands now, Norman, and I trust you with my fortune and child," was the answer of Walter Vernon, and that afternoon he left Glen Idle for the asylum; for he seemed most anxious to get himself under restraint.

Several days after the man who had so suddenly come from comparative poverty into the control of a vast fortune, said that he must leave Glen Idle for a week, to attend to his own business matters, after which he would return and make his home there.

And, as he departed, Mrs. Carrol, the governess of Violet, stood at the window watching him, muttered:

"I know you well, Randolph Norman, and that you are a rascal; but, two can play at this game that you are playing now. Whatever it is you are scheming for I will thwart, for it will be sweet to wreak revenge on you!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE VEILED VISITOR.

When Walter Vernon had advertised for a governess for his little daughter, out of the many answers he received came a letter from Virginia, with which he was particularly pleased.

The letter stated that the writer was a widow, educated, of good family, and needed work to support her and a son who was suffering from a wound received a year before, and which rendered him a cripple for life.

Perhaps it was the fact that the son was a cripple from a wound that influenced Mr. Vernon, but, certain it was, he wrote to the applicant and bade her go at once to Glen Idle and await the coming of his daughter, who would join her there, and that ere long he would follow.

Mrs. Kate Carrol at once obeyed, leaving her wounded son to the care of his sister in their little cottage home in Virginia, and Violet, on her arrival, felt really drawn toward the sad-faced lady.

And Walter Vernon also liked the governess he had secured for his daughter, and, to increase her salary, asked her if she would also be willing to serve as housekeeper, a duty which the lady seemed very willing to assume, as teaching her pretty charge by no means occupied all of her time.

The governess proved herself most efficient in her duties as such, for she was a woman of superior education and accomplishments, and as housekeeper was most thorough, while she was liked by all the servants.

When presented to her, by Mr. Vernon, the new member of Glen Idle had seemed to start, as though he had met her before, and he appeared not to be drawn toward her as the father and daughter had been.

But, when he returned to Glen Idle, after ten days' absence, he seemed to be in a good humor with himself and the world in general, and was particularly polite to Mrs. Carrol.

But efforts of his to draw that lady out, about her antecedents, were useless, for all that he could learn from her was that she was a Southerner, and though her family had once possessed large wealth, they were then poor, so that herself and two others were dependent upon her own exertions for a living.

As the months went by the feeling against Mrs. Carrol seemed to increase in the heart of the guardian of Violet, and he hinted to the little heiress that he would like to secure for her another governess; but this caused such immediate consternation on the part of Violet that he dropped the subject at once.

One day, while the master was in the city, his mail arrived at Glen Idle and was given to Mrs. Carrol.

Glancing over the letters, as she placed them on the library table, with considerable interest, one caught her eye particularly, and she muttered:

"How strangely like Doctor Norman's own writing this is, and—yes, it says on the envelope, 'If not delivered in ten days return to Dudley Norman, M. D., Sunset Mines, California.'"

"I never knew that there were two Dudley Normans, M. D., or that he had a brother.

"It only proves to me that this master of Glen Idle, so trusted by poor Mr. Vernon, is up to some devilry.

"Well, I have had cause to remember him, Heaven knows; but, little does he suspect who I am.

"Mr. Vernon has placed all in his hands beyond recall, and the poor man seems to get no better as time goes on, so what is to be done?"

"I am well paid here, and I need my salary, so must submit to serving him until I can better myself; but if I discover, as I at first believed, that he is playing a bold game here, I will play against him to win.

"Now, who is this Dudley Norman, M. D., of California?"

"That I must find out," and Mrs. Carrol laid the letters on the library table and left the room.

In the time that he had been master of Glen Idle, the assumed Doctor Nor-

man had appeared to lead a most exemplary life. He had completely won the heart of his little ward, and, though he lived to himself, as far as the neighbors were concerned, he yet appeared to enjoy home life at Glen Idle.

At times he would go to his club home in the city for a few days, and upon his return Mrs. Carrol would notice that he looked like a man who had been keeping late hours while away, as his eyes were sunken and his face haggard.

In the asylum Walter Vernon did not seem to grow any better. At times he wrote most rational letters to both Violet and her guardian, and then again they would receive communications that were utterly incoherent.

Any luxury that could be purchased was given him, and he seemed to prefer remaining in the asylum to coming to Glen Idle, as Violet and her guardian had often urged him to do.

Thus nearly a year went by, and when Doctor Norman returned from New York, on the occasion referred to when Mrs. Carrol commented upon his mail, he started as he entered and caught sight of the letter lying on top, which had the name of Dudley Norman, M. D., upon it.

He nervously took it up and saw that it had been forwarded from his old home to an address he had given in Baltimore, and thence to New York, thence to Glen Idle.

He hastily broke the seal and read with a face that paled and a clouded brow, what was written.

It was as follows:

"Sunset Mines, Cal.,

"June 1, 18—.

"My dear Brother:

"I regret to tell you that I have been a long time ill, from an attack of brain fever brought on from an injury received in the mountains one night, when my horse fell down an embankment with me, and I received an injury that prevented my getting back to camp, thus forcing me to remain in a canyon, exposed to a pelting storm, until found and carried to my cabin.

"I am coming to the old home to rest for a few months and regain my health, and I will have to get your aid, as I have but a few hundred dollars in the world, just enough to get me to you, and keep me along for a while.

"I regret to trouble you, but, as there are outstanding debts between us of some two thousand dollars, I know that you will be willing to cancel them by caring for me, as I come to you ill and almost penniless, as I said.

"I am stopping to rest at various points, and will halt for a few days in Buffalo, so write me there.

"With the hope that your bachelor home will accommodate another, and feeling that I will be welcome, believe me,

"Always affectionately,

"DUDLEY."

Dashing the letter to the floor, Randolph Norman sprung to his feet and begun to pace to and fro, his face anxious and white.

"My God! what am I to do? There cannot be two Dudley Normans, two doctors—no! no! this must not be, for, after playing the bold game that I have, I will not have fortune and honor all wrested from me by him!

"No, it shall not be! I have too much at stake; and besides, behind the loss of my riches will be the charge of gaining all I have under false pretences and I will be sent to prison.

"I must think up a plan to prevent his coming—ah! he must be even now in Buffalo, and I must meet him there!

"But, what to do? How to extricate myself from the danger I am in?"

"Ha! I will do it, and a bright thought it is, too.

"He is ill, and a sufferer, and he is almost penniless, while I have a fortune

at my command, yes, and can use it, too!

"By Heaven! I wonder if that accursed governess saw this letter and what is written on the envelope?"

"Of course she did, and I know that she is suspicious of me, for it cannot be simply my guilty conscience that makes me think so."

"Well, I am glad she is going without my having to send her off; but I was a fool to let her engage a person in her stead."

"I will send for her and—"

"Pardon me, Doctor Norman, but I came in to say good-by, as I received word that necessitates my returning home sooner than I expected, and I only waited your coming, sir."

"And the governess in your stead, Mrs. Carrol, when will she arrive?" asked Randolph.

"She will return in the carriage that takes me to the station, as her train arrives at the same hour as mine, sir; but you found your letters all right?"

"Oh yes, and one from a cousin, whose name, by the way, is the same as mine, and he is a physician, too."

"Poor fellow, he is ill in Buffalo, so I shall have to run on there to see him, and of course do not wish to have Violet alone."

"Of course not, sir, and the body who takes my place will soon arrive."

"I am sorry, sir, very sorry to give up my sweet charge, but as I told you, my invalid son demands my constant care now, as he is growing worse each day. You will find the new governess most competent, sir; but I must hurry away."

Mrs. Carrol hastened from the room and the carriage soon after rolled away with her to the station.

Violet had a little friend visiting her, so Randolph was left to his own meditations, and he paced the library in no enviable frame of mind, for the coming home of his twin brother, who, from the really startling resemblance between them, he had so well impersonated, was a thorn in his side that caused him to suffer greatly.

"He shall not come between me and my fortune, my future, not at any cost," he said, almost savagely, and he started as the carriage drove up to the door, returning from the depot.

He saw a lady alight—a slender, graceful form, but the face was veiled, and he stepped to the library door to greet her as the butler ushered her in, asking with a smile:

"I am Doctor Norman, so may I ask if you are my ward's new governess?"

He bowed in a courtly manner, and, as the butler returned to his duties, she moved into the room, threw back her veil, the act displaying a pale, but beautiful face, while she answered: "I am your ward's new governess, Randolph Norman, and your wife as well!"

CHAPTER V.

THE FAIR RESCUER.

Some two years before the scene when a woman, calling herself the wife of Randolph Norman, suddenly appeared before him at Glen Idle, in the person of the new governess of Violet Vernon, a young man stood in a mountainous district of the State of Virginia, regarding with deep interest and admiration the beautiful landscape stretched out before his gaze.

There was a beautiful valley, dotted with farms here and there, belts of forest-land, a large stream, with numerous brooks flowing toward it, and a background of a lofty and rugged range of mountains.

The young man was dressed in sportsman's garb, and, resting upon his gun, stood like one enrapt by the view, for a thunder-storm had swept over the distant mountains, the lightning played in vivid arrows against the dark clouds, the thunder came in peals, like the boom

of heavy guns, and the rain descended in torrents.

"I must hasten, for I shall not only get a ducking if I do not, but the brooks will rise so I shall be unable to cross them," said the huntsman, and throwing his gun over his shoulder, and the strap of his well-filled game-bag around his neck, he set off at a rapid walk down the steep mountain side.

Entering a heavy bit of timber, he came to a rustic bridge spanning what had been in the morning a rivulet, but which was now a surging torrent of muddy waters.

"Just in time," he said, as he sprung upon the bridge, which was already quivering under the rush of the whirling stream.

But, as he spoke, an uprooted tree dashed against one of the uprights on which the bridge rested, and tore it from its hold.

Strong as he was, and capable of great endurance, he found that he was powerless in that mad torrent.

The banks, too, were steep and rocky, and to land was to be dashed to death, even could he have done so.

At length he felt that the end was near, and the sins of a life-time crowded upon his brain and heart, for it seemed that he could no longer fight against death.

Just then the torrent widened, the banks less high and steep, were overflowed by the pent-up stream, and he was fairly hurled forward to where his feet touched bottom.

He made a gigantic effort, for before his almost blinded vision he beheld a cottage and heard voices.

But his strength failed him and he was being borne on once more when he felt himself seized in a strong grasp, his arm was hurled over some one's shoulder, and he was dragged shoreward.

It was a woman who had seized him—nay, a young girl, with a wealth of golden hair hanging down her back.

She had rushed into the water to her waist, and, grasping his arm, had thrown it over her shoulder, and thus sought to save him.

With one more mighty effort she reached the bank just as an old negress rushed to her aid, and the two dragged the now unconscious man up to safety.

When the young man awoke to consciousness he found himself upon the piazza of a pretty cottage, and the negress was by his side.

"It was not you that saved me, auntie," he said, as he gazed upon her.

"I guesses I didn't, sah; it were young missy that run inter de torrent and pulled you ashore, sah, and I only help ter drag yer out."

"I guess you did your share; but, where is your young missy, as you call her?"

"She seen yer was comin' back to yer senses, sah, and she done gone ter git on dry clothes."

"I see; but tell me who it is that I owe my life to, for I was about gone when I caught sight of this cottage and saw a young girl, as I thought, run into the stream and grasp my arm."

"Dat's so, sah; she seen yer comin' flyin' down de stream, sah, and call ter me dere was a man drownin', and I runned out here, and seen her go inter de overflow and grab you, sah. She drug yer ashore, sah, up ter high land."

"It was a hard struggle, and but for your mistress I would now be a dead man; but tell me who she is?"

"Missy Kathleen Carrol, sah, of O'e Virginy."

"Yes, I know this is Virginia, for I came here for a few weeks' hunt in the mountains, and am stopping up at the tavern in the village."

"But this is Miss Kathleen Carrol's farm, I take it?"

"Yes, sah; leastways, it's her ma's."

"I see, and she and her ma live here, do they, in this pretty little home?"

"Yas, massa; missus, Missy Kathleen,

who teaches de country school, me, and two other colored folks, and Mars' Bennett, who am off at college, libs here, for ole massa been dead dese six year."

Thus did the young hunter get the history of his fair rescuer and her family, and he was about to ask another question of the old negress when he heard a light step, and out upon the piazza there came a perfect vision of feminine beauty, in the person of "Missy Kathleen Carrol of Ole Virginy."

"I am glad to see you recovered, sir, and have brought you a glass of brandy, while Aunt Phillis will show you to my brother's room, where you will find dry clothing, for you are about his size, I think, sir."

"I will drink the brandy, Miss Carrol, for I am chilled; but I think I can then go on to the village, where I am stopping, and so give you no more trouble than I have already done, for I know that I have to thank you for saving my life, and if I cannot make words show how deeply I feel, all I owe you, please believe that you will have my life-long gratitude."

He spoke earnestly, and could not have said more, while he held forth his hand, which the young girl grasped, while she said:

"I hope you do not intend to remain a stranger, sir."

"Aunt Phillis has told you my name and our family history, I believe," she said with a laugh.

He took the hint and said:

"Permit me to introduce myself as Randolph Norman, a young lawyer struggling for fame in a distant town, and at present sojourning in Virginia for a few weeks, having come to your mountains to enjoy a short vacation in hunting."

Thus met Kathleen Carrol and Randolph Norman, and to the young girl the man owed his life, the strongest claim one person can have upon another's gratitude.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUEL.

The Carrols came of a good family in Virginia, but the death of Mr. Carrol had left his wife a comparatively poor woman.

She was possessed of nerve, however; gave up the plantation and moved to a little farm in the valley that had been her girlhood's home.

There, with several old servants, she had worked hard to support herself and two children, and give to the latter, a boy and girl, a good education.

At the time that Kathleen Carrol rescued Randolph Norman from drowning, Bennett Carrol, then in his twenty-first year, was just finishing his last term at college, and his mother was in Boston by the bedside of a sister who was dying of consumption, and this left her daughter alone on the little farm with the servants.

But Kathleen taught the country school, half a mile away, and with her books at home, her music and sketching, not to speak of housekeeping and looking after the little farm, her time was too much employed for her to become lonesome.

Had she been so before, from the day she had snatched Randolph Norman from the seething brook she could not complain of loneliness, for he escorted her home from her little school house each day, took tea nearly every afternoon at the cottage, and on Sundays went to church with Kathleen up to the village and dined with her.

Mrs. Carrol was still detained in Boston by the bedside of her sister, and Bennett Carrol had not yet graduated, so that Kathleen had no one to tell her that she was being talked about most unkindly by the villagers, until one day she received a note telling her that she was no longer desired as a teacher of the little school.

Randolph found her in tears, saw the note, and read its cruel dismissal, the cause being plainly given, and he at once said:

"Kathleen, I have lingered here six weeks beyond my intended stay, hoping for your mother's return, but she is yet to be delayed for some time, so come with me to the city and become my wife."

Kathleen loved the man with all her heart and soul, and she went with him, but only to return home a few months after, almost broken-hearted.

Not a word would she say against the man she loved, but her mother and brother knew that she had found him out to be a gambler, living by cards alone, and that he had treated her shamefully, cruelly, until she was forced to fly from him for fear of her life.

He had never taken her to his home, nor introduced her in the city to a single friend as his wife, and about him she positively knew next to nothing.

But she clung to him through all until one day he told her that the ceremony which had bound them together was a mock marriage and she held no legal claim upon him or his name.

In horror at the wrong he had done her, and believing him, she had fled from him and gone back to her home; but not a word did she utter of the fearful truth against Randolph Norman.

One day a letter came for Kathleen, and the envelope had not been sealed. Bennett Carrol, who was at home reading law in the office of a village attorney, had been deeply grieved by his sister's sorrows, and anxious to know just what it was that had divided her from the man she had secretly married, took advantage of the envelope not having been sealed to read the letter.

What he read caused him to utter an oath between his set teeth and his face to become livid.

And no wonder, for the letter was as follows:

"Kathleen, what I told you was the truth; you have no legal claim upon me, I having bribed a man to play clergyman and unite us, that we might, should we wish to separate some day, have no cause in law for not doing so.

"It is best, however, that we should have a separation in a legal way, I think, after all, and if you will come up to the city next week we can go before a judge and come to an understanding in the matter, so that, should you or I wish to marry some day, our mock marriage, if known, will not be a hindrance in the way.

"You will find me at the old address.

"I send twenty dollars within for your traveling expenses, as I know that money is not plentiful in the Rose Vale Cottage. Yours, R. N."

One hour after reading this cruel, heartless, letter Bennett Carrol was on his way to Baltimore, and his sister and mother knew nothing of the reason of his going.

He had a college mate in the city, one who had been his dearest friend, and he at once sought him out.

"Truett, I have come here to meet a man who has done me and mine a great wrong.

"I can tell you no more; but this is his address, and I beg you to go to him at once and demand that he meet me on the field of honor.

"Tell him that I made no charges, only that a letter he wrote to one dear to me fell into my hands, and if he refuses to give me satisfaction I shall kill him at sight as I would a mad dog."

Horace Truett in vain tried to argue his friend into a more peaceable settlement of the affair, but seeing that Bennett Carrol was in deadly earnest he at once sought Randolph Norman at his rooms.

"Ah! the fair lady has turned upon me and sent her brother to champion her?"

"So be it! I must meet him or he may do something desperate.

"You will act for me, Marsden, in a little affair I have on hand," and Randolph turned to a friend who was in his rooms with him when Horace Truett called.

"Is it a fight, Norman?" drawled the young gentleman addressed as Marsden, and who had a very fast, dissipated look.

"Yes."

"It's deuced bad getting up so early in the morning, but I suppose I must."

"Thank you. Your name, please."

"Horace Truett."

"Ah, yes; Mr. Truett, my friend, Mr. Marsden, who will arrange with you."

"A handsome fellow, Bennett, and devilish cool about it all," said Horace Truett, when he entered his friend's room at the hotel, half an hour after.

"I never met him; but, is all arranged?"

"Yes, for the bay shore, at the group of cedars beyond Fort McHenry, and at sunrise to-morrow."

"And weapons?"

"Pistols, at ten paces."

The next morning five men stood among a group of cedars upon the shores of Chesapeake Bay, and two of the five faced each other at ten paces, pistols in hand.

There was heard a low, distinct command, and the two men raised the dueling pistols which they grasped, and fired, almost together.

One of the two remained standing, evidently unharmed, gazing almost unconcernedly at the scene before him.

That scene was a man prostrate on the ground, silent, motionless, as if death-stricken, while over him bent another, his second, looking into the staring eyes that gave back no recognition.

Randolph Norman, standing but a moment, walked away and was soon joined by Marsden as he stood upon the shore, gazing with seeming admiration upon the waters giving way under the rays of the rising sun.

An hour after Bennett Carrol lay in his friend Truett's rooms, with equal chances between life and death, and his mother and sister had been telegraphed for to come to him at once.

And Randolph Norman was speeding away to his native town to keep in retirement until the fate of his victim was known.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WIDOW'S PLOT.

Now that the reader has received an insight into the true character of Randolph Norman, I will return to that individual in the elegant house of Glen Idle, where he was confronted by the new governess, who claimed to be his wife.

The young lawyer in his native town had not been regarded as other than a trifle wild.

But his trips to the city, when considered to have been on business, had been mostly to indulge his passion for gambling and to lead a fast life, and thus had he involved himself in troubles that would have ended in his ruin but for the arrival of the letter for his brother.

Knowing that few could tell his brother and himself apart, he had daringly played the game of impersonating Dudley Norman.

The five hundred dollar check sent him by his brother had enabled him to pay up some little debts and to go on to New York, when, for the purpose of appearing better with the miner he had returned him the one he had sent for five thousand.

But the very first thing he did when once in control of the Vernon estate was to send the money to make up his appropriation to clients and square up his business in his native town.

The duel he had had with Bennett Carrol was unknown, save to the few engaged, for, though desperately wounded, the young law student rallied, and under the devoted nursing of his mother and

sister was able to remove to a new house in the outskirts of Baltimore, for Mrs. Carrol was forced to sell her farm and other property in Virginia, to get means to care for her son.

A little cottage was bought near town and humbly furnished, and with old Phillis only to look after the house, the mother and daughter bravely set to work to earn a livelihood for all.

A part of the day Kathleen would be away, teaching music and drawing; her mother also helped by giving a few French lessons and doing any service, while Phillis milked the cow and devoted herself to the housekeeping.

Thus passed the long, weary, dreary months of suffering, for, though his wound had healed, it had left Bennett Carrol partially paralyzed, and, therefore, nearly helpless.

And the one who had caused all this misery, broken up the pleasant home in Virginia, and brought the family to the hardest work to support the wounded man, was dwelling in comparative luxury at home.

Then had come to him the windfall of impersonating his brother, and Randolph Norman, like Lucifer, stepped into a superb home and the management of a vast estate, with a beautiful young girl to care for and bring up as a lady and an heiress.

One day a person, in passing the cottage of the Carrol's, dropped a paper.

Old Phillis called after him, as she ran out and picked it up, but he said that it did not matter and walked briskly on.

So Phillis carried it into the house, and glancing at it Mrs. Carrol saw an advertisement which she eagerly read.

"Wanted, a refined and well educated lady to take charge of a young girl as governess, in the home of a gentleman of wealth, living in New York, on the Hudson River. To a person who can teach French and music a salary of twelve hundred dollars a year and expenses will be paid. Address, etc."

Ten minutes after Phillis was on her way to the post office with a letter mailed to the address given in the advertisement, and, a few weeks from that date, found Mrs. Carrol the governess of Violet Vernon at Glen Idle.

The widow had never met Randolph Norman, but Kathleen had a miniature likeness of him, and when he had appeared at Glen Idle, she at once identified the man and knew that he was sailing under false colors.

When, therefore, Mrs. Carrol had met Randolph Norman at Glen Idle, she beheld in him the image of the miniature her daughter had of him, and, as she knew that there could not be two men of the same name so alike by accident, she was convinced that the person whom Walter Vernon trusted so thoroughly was up to some deep, daring scheme; and from that day she became a spy, upon him.

At last, thoroughly convinced that the pretended Doctor Dudley Norman was none other than the man who had so wronged her, she determined to act, and for the good of both Mr. Vernon and Violet, so she wrote to Kathleen, told her what her suspicions were, and, after awhile, decided to have her come to Glen Idle.

Poor Bennett needed her constant care, she well knew, for his wound had reopened, and the mother realized that to see him suffer was a constant sorrow to Kathleen.

So she told the pretended Doctor Norman that she would have to give up her place as governess, but would advertise for a proper person to take her place, and if no one offered who was satisfactory, she knew a young lady who would be glad to come, and Violet would like her, she was certain.

The plotting widow well understood that Norman would leave all to her to arrange, as he did, and, once her daughter came on as arranged, and the master of Glen Idle proved to be the

recreant husband, she would leave it to Kathleen to make the best of it.

She was well aware that every particle of love in the breast of Kathleen for Randolph Norman, whose life she had saved, and who had so wronged her and had given her brother the wound that was killing him, had turned to bitterest hatred, and if she did not revenge herself in some way upon him it would be her own fault.

The man was gambling away money rapidly, and otherwise squandering the estate of the man who had trusted him.

And so, all had been cleverly plotted. On the precise day of the Widow Carroll's departure from Glen Idle, the new governess arrived, and, to his horror, Randolph Norman discovered in the veiled woman who swept into his library none other than the one he had so cruelly wronged.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNMASKING OF RANDOLPH NORMAN.

Pallid, quivering and frightened, it was a moment before Randolph Norman could command himself.

He could control himself only after a mighty effort, and in that second of time he decided how to act.

"My dear madam," he said, in a voice that was low and musical, though it was not at first free from a tremor, "be seated, pray, and let me know how I can serve you, but I fear from the name you called me by you mistake me for another."

"No, I am not mistaken, Randolph Norman, for I certainly have cause to remember you," was the reply, and Kathleen was visibly affected.

"Ah! you call me Randolph Norman. I knew there was some mistake."

"And you are Randolph Norman?"

"No, I am the brother, the twin brother, of Randolph Norman, and the likeness between us is startling, but I am Dudley Norman."

Kathleen was staggered.

Could she be mistaken, after all?

"The likeness is indeed startling, sir; but, may I ask where your brother is," she said, as though convinced.

"Alas! I do not know. Unfortunately for himself, and for me also, he is a wild, reckless fellow, given to all kinds of dissipations and social vices, and he has caused me a world of sorrow and trouble."

"But, do you really mean that you are his wife?"

"As I said, sir, I am his wife."

"Ah! I pity you, for I heard something of his having allied himself to a poor girl down in Virginia, and I fear he may have served you as he did her."

"I am that unfortunate girl, sir."

"You? Then how cruelly he deceived you, for it was told to me that the marriage was illegal, a mock ceremony in fact; and afterwards he deserted her."

"Yes, and it was my brother whom he shot in a duel, for poor Bennett, my brother I refer to, sought to avenge the wrong done me."

"And met him in a duel, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"God forgive me for saying so, but, it had been better if poor, misguided Randolph had fallen, rather than your brave brother."

"He would have, sir, but for his treachery and cowardice, for my brother was a dead shot."

"Ah! how was that?"

"He wore a shirt of wire mail under his vest, and that caught the bullet just over his heart and held it."

"Indeed! and how did you learn of this cowardly act of his?"

"The bullet fell upon the ground where the duel was fought, and I visited the scene and picked it up, and I have it now."

"Yet he may not have worn the wire armor you speak of—"

"He did, sir, for I played detective on his track, disguised as a boy, and learned

that he had a wire armor that fitted like a shirt, made by a skilled artisan in Baltimore, and he went to his shop the night before the duel and put it on there, so the man told me."

"Yes, your brother, sir, is a coward, as well as a villain."

"Alas! it so seems; and I do not wonder that you feel revengeful towards him, when he deceived you by a mock marriage."

"Oh, no; I was really his wife, and am so yet!"

"Indeed? but I thought the marriage was a mockery, and was so regarded by all concerned?"

"So he thought, but he was mistaken."

Randolph Norman changed color, but said:

"I congratulate you, then, madam, if it is so, and I shall be glad to extend to you all the aid in my power to atone for my brother's sins towards you."

"But, have you the proof of your marriage to him?"

"I have, sir."

"May I ask what proof, for if you are really his wife, I desire to take certain steps for your welfare in the future."

"My proof is that the tool he bribed to help him out in his villainy, was not so vile as he, for, instead of doing as he was told, and hiring a man to act the part of a clergyman, he went and procured an ordained priest of the Episcopal Church, and my marriage is recorded by him, real names and all, which the bribed man gave to the minister, instead of the fictitious ones Randolph Norman bade him give."

Randolph Norman fairly trembled at this, but said, as he turned his face away from the light:

"If you will give me the proofs of this, madam, I will see that you are cared for with a regular income, which I will gladly allow you."

"You are most kind, sir; but how striking is the likeness you bear to your brother, my husband!" and Kathleen gazed fixedly at him.

"As I said, madam, the resemblance always was startling; but you will give me your address now, so that I can arrange your income, and the address also of the clergyman who married you, as well as that of this tool of my brother's who so cleverly deceived him?"

"Thank you; but I prefer to make my own living, Doctor Norman, and, as the governess of your ward, I can do so and feel independent."

Randolph Norman winced at this.

"My dear madam, I regret exceedingly that I shall be unable to accept your services as the governess of my ward; but you must see that it is best you do not remain, under the circumstances."

"As my brother's wife I will allow you the same income as I would had you remained as governess, and—"

The man stopped suddenly, for Kathleen broke forth into a burst of ringing, mocking laughter, while she said with biting sarcasm:

"Randolph, my dear husband, are you a fool as well as a villain?"

CHAPTER IX.

FURNISHING THE PROOF.

"Woman! in the name of Heaven, what do you mean?" cried Randolph Norman, again turning pallid at the words and mocking laughter of her whom he had, as he supposed, so cleverly deceived.

She had played the detective well, and all she had passed through in tracking out the villainy of her wicked husband had quite changed her nature.

Now, brought to bay, he had sought to deceive her, and pretend to be the noble brother of the wicked Randolph.

She had led him on most cleverly, and then, when she had seen him wince and grow pale at the proof that she was really his wife, and seek to get rid of her, that he might plot to keep her out of the way, she had broken forth into a laughter that no matter how she enjoyed

it, and his discomfiture, certainly had a very mocking ring in its tone of mirth.

"What do I mean, husband mine, you ask?" she said in a lazy, provoking way.

"Are you mad, that you call me your husband, after my full explanation to you, madam?"

Again she laughed tauntingly, and he grew uneasy.

The woman was at her ease, and the man was growing terribly nervous.

"Randolph—ah! I beg pardon—Doctor Norman, may I ask if you are aware of any striking resemblances between you and your twin brother, other than in general appearance?"

"We are as like as two human beings can well be, and not be the same."

"You mean excepting in character?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, has your twin brother a mole on his neck just under his left ear—it's a sign that a man is to be hanged, I have heard old people say."

"Ah, yes. I believe we both have such a mark."

"And how strange, too, that even a scar on his forehead you should have!"

His face flushed deeply, but he said: "We both got hurts in childhood that left pretty much the same scar."

"And that very remarkable ring you wear, remarkable because I never saw but one like it, and that your brother told me was given to him by his father, who bought it in India long years ago."

"Yes, it is a remarkable ring, and knowing how I always prized it, my brother sent it to me last Christmas as a present."

"Indeed! I thought you had not heard from your brother since his duel, over a year ago?"

"Ah, did I say last Christmas?" How forgetful I am, for it was Christmas a year ago; but, I beg my dear madam, that you will accept my offer of aid, an income to you, and—"

"Pardon me, sir, but I observe that you have the same design in the palm of your hand, pricked in with India ink, that your brother has. An anchor it is."

"Yes, my father did that, for he was a naval officer in early life, and he wished to be able to distinguish my brother and myself apart," and the man was rapidly losing his nerve.

"And so he pricked in an anchor in the palm of your hand?"

"Yes."

"And in your brother's also?"

"Oh yes; but—"

"And he made the mistake of putting your brother's initials, R. N., in your hand, Doctor Dudley Norman?"

Randolph Norman uttered an oath beneath his breath.

He realized now that the woman was not deceived.

He must try another plan, and he would act promptly.

So he arose, and stepping to the door, locked it.

When he returned he started, as he saw that Kathleen, without changing her lazy position in the chair, had a revolver in her hand and the muzzle was pointed toward him.

"Curses! do you intend to kill me, woman?" he demanded, savagely.

She laughed and replied: "Not unless you force me to fight this new Lucifer with fire, Randolph; but I wish to tell you that I have practised a great deal with a revolver and am a dead shot, so if I had to fire I would aim at your head, and thus be sure to avoid flattening my bullet against your shirt of mail, should you still wear it."

"A truce to this nonsense, and let us talk business."

"Well?"

"You know me; I admit that."

"Of course, and better than you think, for I went to your native town and got all your family history."

"And sent your mother here as a spy on me, for now I know who it is she resembled so."

"No, my mother came in answer to

an advertisement to serve Mr. Vernon; but, having seen your likeness, she recognized you, and at once became suspicious, as well as alarmed for Mr. Vernon's sake.

"She wrote me, and I set to work; and when I had tracked you, I decided to come as governess in her stead, to your fair young ward, who, I am told, is a most lovely girl."

"It is of you that I wish to speak."

"Why are you here?"

"To act as governess to Violet Vernon, as I said, for you know I am an excellent teacher—yes, and a competent housekeeper, too, for you have often tried my cooking and seen what a cosy home I kept."

"Then, too, I speak German and French, and you have said that I sing divinely and play with great expression, while you have done me the honor to state that I was no mean artist with brush and pencil."

"I ride and drive well, that you know; and all this being true, I should say that I am the very person to teach your ward."

"Never! You shall not hold such a position to her."

"And I say that I will be the governess of Violet Vernon."

"If I refuse you?"

"What do I care for that, as you will have to change your mind, or give up your guardianship."

"In Satan's name, what do you mean?"

"I know that Mr. Vernon's malady, is not so bad as he believes, and at times, for months, he is perfectly rational, so I will go and tell him the truth."

"You dare not!"

"I have the proofs that I saved your life, and that you sought to bind me solely by a mock marriage, while it was a real one, and my poor brother, dying by inches, is a witness to your crime against him."

"He will still believe what I tell him."

"How about your brother Dudley?"

"What of him?"

"Suppose I bring him before Mr. Vernon? What then?"

"He is dead?"

"Is he, when he wrote you a letter which this very day you received?"

A cold sweat broke out on the forehead of Randolph Norman.

Mrs. Carrol had told her daughter of this letter from Dudley Norman, in the short conversation they had had at the station; but Randolph did not know just what his wife knew.

At last he said:

"Well, I see that it is going to cost me something to get rid of you, so I might as well make up my mind to pay it at once and be done with you forever."

"So name your price, woman."

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

Again came that ringing, mocking burst of laughter from the lips of Kathleen Norman, and it fairly made Randolph Norman's blood run cold with dread.

"In Satan's name hush that infernal laughter. What will the servants think if they hear you?" said Randolph Norman nervously.

"That you have engaged a very merry governess for your ward, that is all. But, you ask my price."

"I do."

"Suppose I said fifty thousand dollars."

"Will you grant me a divorce for that sum?"

"In cash?"

"Yes, the moment the divorce is granted."

"I did not know you were a rich man."

"I can raise the money."

"Yes, by stealing it from Mr. Vernon and his daughter, as you have stolen many a thousand before to gamble away in New York."

"You see I have tracked you well, Randolph Norman."

"Woman, woman! You nearly drive me to do that which I may repent."

"I will be the first time, then, that repentance ever entered your wicked heart, husband mine."

"Will you accept my terms?"

"No! for I will not be a party to the robbery of Mr. Vernon and his daughter."

"I will raise the money from investments of my own that I have made."

"You have not a dollar, and I know it."

"In Heaven's name, what do you want then?"

"No sum could tempt me to give you your freedom, my dear husband; but I can be brought to silence."

"Well, name your price."

"To be governess to your ward."

"That you may tell her all."

"Oh, no; I am not treacherous. I love you so dearly I merely wish to be near you, and no one shall know that we ever met before."

"I will be as distant to you as was my mother, and you shall not have the slightest fault to find with me, I promise you."

The man paced to and fro with anxious face.

How he could get rid of her was beyond his power to discover.

He must play a different game with her if he wished to triumph; Lucifer must not be balked by a woman. So he turned to her and said in a tone of remorse:

"Kathleen, I did act a mean part by you; but the devil seemed to hold sway over me, and I could not resist to save my soul from perdition."

"I did you a wrong, and I assure you I am most happy to feel that the marriage was not a bogus one, for you are, I freely confess, my lawful wife."

"Having sinned against you, I yet did a greater wrong in meeting your brother in a duel, but he threatened to kill me at sight if I did not, and life, you know, is sweet."

"I see now the enormity of my crimes, for, driven to desperation by debts, and seeing a prison staring me in the face, I impersonated my brother and now hold the position that you see me in."

"I now wish to make all the reparation in my power, and you shall be Violet's governess."

"You can come as though you were a stranger to me, and be known as Miss Randolph."

"I will treat you with marked respect, and will use the means at my command to make money for myself, and for you, that we may lay up a snug sum for ourselves."

"Then I will send Violet to boarding-school, confess to my brother the wrong I have done, and, dismissing the servants, have him come here and take charge, no one being the wiser, for he can hire other servants, and if Violet is away from him a year she will never recognize the difference between us."

"What do you say, Kathleen, my wife?"

As he stepped towards her there was a sound of carriage wheels upon the gravel drive. Randolph Norman sprang to the library door and opened it, for he heard the footsteps of the butler approaching.

Then the front door was thrown open, and the next moment a visitor entered:

"Mr. Vernon!"

The name came from the lips of Randolph Norman with a gasp, as he beheld the Californian appear, like a ghost before him.

CHAPTER XI.

IS THE NEW GOVERNESS A SPY?

When the man of all men he had wished less to see, unless it was his brother, entered the library at Glen Idle, Randolph Norman turned to the hue of a corpse, after he had gasped, "Mr. Vernon!"

A few moments more and he would have known the effect of his words upon Kathleen; whether his affected remorse, his promises of reformation, and confessions of wrong had influenced her.

But ere she could make reply, the carriage wheels were heard upon the drive, the front door swung open, and Walter Vernon, supposed to be in the insane asylum, strode in the room.

"My dear Mr. Vernon! What a joyous surprise, and so wholly unexpected!" and he grasped his hand.

"Yes, I thought I would surprise you, Norman; for I longed so to see my child."

"I will have Violet called at once, for she has a little friend visiting her for a couple of days," and Randolph touched a bell near at hand, while Mr. Vernon said:

"But I see you have a visitor, and—"

"Ah, yes," and Norman turned to Kathleen, who had walked over toward the window, and continued:

"Miss Randolph, this gentleman is Mr. Vernon, the father of my ward, and whose health causes him to remain away from home."

Would Kathleen boldly speak out and betray him, or would she accept the situation as it was, as he had offered it to her?

But, she walked up to Mr. Vernon and said: "I am glad to meet you, sir, and I only hope I may do my whole duty by your motherless child."

"I feel that you will, for one with your face can only be the truest of women; but, may I ask why Mrs. Carrol left, Norman?"

"Her son's health is failing rapidly, sir, and she was forced to be with him, but she recommended Miss Randolph, sir."

This was said without any show of feeling which would indicate that Bennett Carrol was dying from a wound given by the hand of the man who uttered the words.

The impostor was himself again!

He saw Kathleen's face flush and then pale at his reference to her brother, and noted her flashing eyes; but he felt that he was master of the situation.

Just then Violet came bounding into the room and sprang into her father's arms.

After the greeting was over, Randolph said:

"Violet, here is some one else for you to welcome, your new governess, Miss Randolph, whom I know you will love most dearly."

"Yes, I am sure you will my child," said Mr. Vernon.

Violet went up to Kathleen and said in her sweet way:

"Oh, how beautiful you are! Yes, indeed, will I love you; but I loved dear Mrs. Carrol, too."

Kathleen bent over and kissed her, and the child saw the beautiful eyes fill with tears, and said quickly:

"Come with me and I'll take you to your room, for it is all ready."

"Excuse us, papa and gardy," and the little heiress of Glen Idle and her new governess went away.

Her room was certainly a charming one, large, luxuriously furnished, and commanding a superb view of the Hudson and the Jersey hills beyond.

A door opened into a large sitting room, which was also Violet's study and music room, and adjoining it was the chamber of the pretty little heiress.

The walls were hung with fine paintings, bric-a-brac was scattered about in profusion, a grand piano was on one side, and a guitar lay upon its velvet cover, while there was a case filled with a library of just such books as a child would be interested in.

Ordering her maid to look to the comfort of Miss Randolph, and that she would come for her when supper was ready, Violet left Kathleen in her new quarters.

Telling Jessie, the maid, that she would

not need her services, Kathleen threw herself down upon the bed and burst into tears, while she murmured over and over again:

"My God! How will all this end?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMPACT.

Several days passed at Glen Idle, and though outwardly calm, Randolph Norman was suffering torment.

He had had no opportunity to see Kathleen again alone, and have a full understanding with her, and he greatly dreaded the presence of Mr. Vernon.

Kathleen assumed the full management with the air of one who knew just what she was about, and felt perfectly at home.

After a stay of three days, Mr. Vernon decided that he must go back to his asylum.

He had run over business matters with Randolph, and told him he was an economical and splendid manager, while he had well acted the part of a father to Violet.

Had he, however, looked into the bank accounts thoroughly, he would have discovered that many thousands were missing, which had gone over the gambling table, but which were accounted for as "on deposit."

He took his departure, and, as Violet drove with him to the station, the arch-plotter took the opportunity to have an interview with Kathleen.

He at once sent for her, and asked her to go with him for a walk. He would be sure that no eavesdroppers heard or beheld what might pass between them.

"It must be," Kathleen had said to herself, as she obeyed the summons, and the two walked down toward the river arbor together.

"Kathleen, Mr. Vernon's coming the other day prevented our settling affairs between us," began Randolph.

"Well, what settlement do you wish, other than that I am to remain here as governess to Violet?" she asked coldly.

"Of course, you are my wife; that I do not deny; and yet we cannot now make it public, so I desire that you remain here as Miss Randolph, and in time I will ask you to become my wife before the world."

"It will appear as though we met here for the first time, loved each other, and thus married."

"You are in earnest?"

"Of course, I am; but I ask if your mother knows aught about me?"

"In what respect?"

"Does she know me as Randolph Norman?"

"She suspects you of being the one who so cruelly deceived me."

"Could you not convince her that I am really Dudley Norman, and that Randolph, my twin brother, is the scapegrace who has fled to the west?"

"Yes, I could have her so believe."

"And will?"

"That depends upon you."

"In what respect?"

"Do you mean what you say about making me your wife publicly one of these days?"

"I do most solemnly vow it."

"Will you give me a written statement that I may place in a safe place stating that you are Randolph Norman, and that you are the one who sinned against me, and are now playing the part of your brother Dudley?"

"This is hardly fair Kathleen."

"If you mean to be honest with me, I shall return it to you the day you publicly make me your wife here in Glen Idle."

"I will do as you wish; but you must convince your mother that I am all right, and not Randolph Norman."

"Leave that to me."

"Then this is a compact between us?"

"When you give me the written confession and statement I ask; yes."

"Then let us return to the house and I will write it."

Back to the mansion they wended their way, and the man wrote as the woman dictated.

"I, Randolph Norman, hereby confess to having deceived Kathleen Carrol into what I believed was a mock marriage, but which I now know to have been a legal one, from proofs in the possession of said Kathleen Norman, once Kathleen Carrol; and I also confess that I am not Dudley Norman, M. D., as is believed, as I have impersonated my twin brother, who properly bears that name, for my own advancement alone, and that he is now living in California."

"I further acknowledge it to be my intention within one year from date to publicly acknowledge the said Kathleen Carrol to be my lawful wife, entering into a marriage with her here at Glen Idle, that the former marriage may not be suspected as having occurred, and until such ceremony of public acknowledgment the said Kathleen Carrol, under the name of Miss Kathleen Randolph, shall remain at Glen Idle as governess to Violet, the daughter of Walter Vernon, now an inmate of the asylum at —, State of New York."

Such was the damaging proof of his guilt that Randolph Norman wrote, signed, and placed in the hands of Kathleen.

The next morning Randolph Norman left Glen Idle to meet his brother at Buffalo, and there confront the new danger which threatened to undo his wrongdoing and brand him the impostor and villain that he was!

CHAPTER XIII.

A BROTHER'S CRIME.

Doctor Carter sat in his elegant home after dinner, enjoying a cigar, when a visitor was announced.

The visitor was a stranger in the city, and his visit was on a matter of importance.

"Show him in," said Doctor Carter.

"Pardon me, Doctor Carter, for imposing upon you by calling at your home, but it is important."

Doctor Carter glanced at the card and said:

"Doctor Norman, I am glad to meet you, sir, so no apologies for your coming, but tell me how can I serve you."

"I am here, sir, to ask you to visit my brother, a twin brother, who, from illness and an injury received in the west, has lost his mind, or, rather, has strange fancies."

"One of his hallucinations is that he is myself, for he calls himself by my name, Dudley Norman, instead of his own name of Randolph, and has come East for treatment."

"My own wish is to have him taken to an asylum and treated; and let me say, sir, that, though he is a poor man, I possess a large fortune, and am more than willing to pay any sum for his care and comfort."

"This is noble of you, Doctor Norman, and I assure you I agree with you that it is best to place him in an asylum for treatment."

"I can recommend one in R—, though it is an expensive one."

"Expense is nothing, so that my poor brother has every comfort—in fact, luxury."

"He will have that there, sir. Where is he now?"

"At the hotel; he arrived to-day."

"If you can recommend an attendant, sir, and in fact, would call and see my brother, I would feel obliged."

"Certainly, sir; I will call this evening. In the meantime, I will send you a man whom you can rely on."

The visitor took his leave and drove rapidly back to the hotel.

In a pleasant room sat a man who apparently was an invalid, for his face was pallid, his look wan, as though from suffering.

The door opened and Randolph Norman entered.

In spite of the fact that the one was an invalid, the other, in perfect health, there was a striking resemblance between the two.

"Well, brother, I have engaged you another nurse, and consulted Doctor Carter about your case. He thinks, with me, that it is best for you to go to a cure establishment or sanitarium for a short while, where you can have every attention."

"You are to have an attendant, and every luxury, and in a short while you will come to me in my new home well and happy."

Just then came a knock on the door, and in answer to Randolph Norman's command to come in, there entered a sleek-looking individual, who bowed low as he said:

"Doctor Norman's room, sir?"

"Yes."

"I'm Breton, sir—Frederick Breton, the nurse, as has been sent by Doctor Carter, sir."

"Ah, yes, Breton; I am glad to see you. This is my brother, whom you must care for as though he were your own kinsman, if you wish me to remember you liberally in addition to your regular pay."

"Yes, sir. He will, sir."

"Doctor Carter, sir, hexplained hall to me, sir."

Frederick Breton at once set to work in a way that showed how thoroughly he understood his business.

Then Doctor Carter called and was introduced, and the invalid remarked:

"You forgot to call me doctor, Brother Randolph."

"So I did; but you know I have never known you by your title, we have been so long separated."

"Doctor Carter, I wish you now, sir, to say just what you think is best for my brother."

Doctor Carter took a seat by the invalid, felt his pulse, took his temperature, looked down his throat, sounded his chest, and listened to the beating of his heart and his breathing.

"My advice, sir, is that you go to a place where you can get perfect rest, pure air, the best of food, and every attention, and a few months will bring you out all right."

Doctor Carter took his leave, Randolph Norman following him out of the room and slipping into his hands a check.

"Oh, no, sir; you are a member of the profession, and—"

"My dear doctor, this is not a case of professional courtesy, for I shall never ask for your services unless I can pay for them; therefore accept my check and take my brother's case in hand. What is your opinion, may I ask?"

"His is a serious case, sir, I fear, for there is every indication of insanity; but, rest and good treatment may bring him around in time, though it cannot be hastened."

"So I think, sir."

"Here is a letter to Doctor Antisane of the Electro-Hydropathic-Cureall Retreat, of which I am visiting physician four times yearly. Your brother, with his special nurse, can have his parlor and bedroom, with all attention, for one hundred dollars a week."

Doctor Carter walked away, after a warm shake of the hand of his patron, and glancing at the check he gave a chuckle of delight as he saw that it was for five hundred dollars!

And, well pleased with his evening's work, the learned "specialist" returned home.

The next day Doctor Dudley Norman found himself an inmate of Doctor Antisane's Cureall Retreat.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEA GYPSIES.

The days at Glen Idle passed along in the even tenor of their way, and all seemed to be serene.

Mr. Vernon was heard from once a month. At times he spoke encouragingly of his health and hope of getting well.

Each month a check went to him for his support, from Randolph Norman, and another check, even larger, was sent to Doctor Antisane of the Cureall Retreat, to pay for the care of poor Dudley Norman.

Doctor Carter had paid his quarterly visit to that institution, and wrote to "Doctor Dudley Norman of Glen Idle" that his brother's bodily health was perfect, but that, mentally, he was no better, was constantly fretted at his confinement, and still had the hallucination that he was Dudley Norman.

"His knowledge of medicine I could not understand, it was so perfect, until your letter stating that he had studied to be a physician explained it all," the doctor's letter had concluded.

Of course Doctor Antisane had a motive in wishing to keep a hundred dollar a week patient; but Doctor Carter, having had no suspicion of designed deception, was really deceived.

From the day of her coming to Glen Idle Kathleen had been a favorite with all, the servants particularly liking her.

Violet had learned to love her most dearly, and was improving rapidly in her studies, and also in her painting and music.

When at home "Doctor" Norman kept a great deal to himself.

Then, he spent a considerable part of his time in the city, where he said he had been forced to open an office to look after the affairs of the estate the better.

Certain it was that his letters no longer came to Glen Idle.

Thrown upon their own resources, in a measure, Kathleen and Violet rode horseback and drove together, took long walks in the woods, or rowed upon the river.

Thus had passed nearly a year, and not once had Randolph Norman spoken to Kathleen a word more in regard to their compact.

He was ever markedly polite, had seemed to seek her society at times, and they had driven together, rowed upon the river, and frequently sat for hours in the library in each other's company, until the servants felt sure among themselves that it would end in a match between the master and the governess.

One day Violet and her governess came in just in time to appear at dinner.

"Gardy, we made a discovery," declared Violet.

"What was it?" asked Randolph.

"Did you ever hear of Sea Gypsies, Gardy?"

"Yes; but why do you ask?"

"There are some here; and they are anchored in the little basin above our grounds. Miss Randolph went with me to see them."

"Well, tell me of them."

"They have a pretty schooner, and the hull is painted blue, while there is a figure-head of a witch, and the craft is named the Ocean Gypsy. And besides, there are fully a dozen monkeys and a couple of tame bears."

"And are there no people?" asked Norman, with a smile.

"Yes, indeed, Gardy! and a queer set they are, too."

"Of course there is a Gypsy Queen?"

"I was just going to tell you about her. She is old, with white hair, jet-black eyes, and, though old, yet is as quick in her movements as I am."

"Her name is Quito, the Gypsy Queen, and she is a fortune teller, and Miss Randolph and I are going to have our fortunes told by her to-morrow."

"And they are anchored near here, you say, Vi?"

"Yes, sir, in the inlet; and they have their camp ashore in the woods."

"I told Violet we would go to-morrow, if you did not object."

"It is all nonsense, this pretending to read one's destiny," he protested.

"Of course it is," responded the governess, and the subject of the sea gypsies was dropped.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.

A man in a somewhat picturesque garb stood on the roadside gazing at a gentleman passing slowly along a path in the fine park of majestic trees near Glen Idle mansion.

His face was youthful, dark as an Indian's, and his eyes were black and full of fire.

"Yes, that is the gentleman. I cannot be mistaken. He has changed since then; but he is the same, I know that."

"And yet, the lady is not his wife here, but she was there."

"It is strange, very strange, but I must find out more, so that Queen Quito may know how to tell strange fortunes."

His eyes were upon the master of Glen Idle as he spoke, for Randolph Norman was coming along the path directly toward him.

As he saw the man he halted, and glancing at him, though he hardly returned his polite salute, said:

"Are you one of the Sea Gypsies, encamped upon the shore above here, my man?"

"Yes, I am a Sea Gypsy, your Honor, and my people are half a mile from here."

"But, surely I have seen you before," and Norman gazed fixedly into his face.

"It may be so, sir."

"You are strangely like one I once knew."

"All gypsies are alike, sir."

"But, the one I mean was not a gypsy. You are strangely like him. What is your name?"

"Soto, senor. I belong to the Spanish gypsies."

"And your queen is in camp?"

"No, sir; Queen Quito is away."

"I learn that she is a fortune teller."

"She reads human lives, senor."

"Well, I will come again to see her."

Don't forget to tell her that I am coming to have my fortune told," and he slipped a bankbill into the hand of the gypsy.

Raising his hat, the gypsy went away toward his camp.

It was upon the banks of the Hudson, and beautifully situated in a grove of trees.

The camp consisted of one large and four small tents, and a score of people, men, women, and children, in picturesque attire were there.

In a small indenture of the river bank, which formed a tiny basin, a schooner of three hundred tons was at anchor.

The young man who had met Randolph Norman went at once on board the schooner, sculling out in a light skiff.

He entered the cabin, which was large and decorated in a most fantastic manner, with souvenirs from a dozen foreign lands.

A woman was lying upon a divan. Her appearance was striking, for her hair was snow-white, her eyes jet black, and her complexion dark, but of a rich hue.

"Well, Soto, who comes?" she asked in a low voice, as the gypsy entered.

"No one, for I said you were away, as I met one who will come to-morrow to hear what you can tell him of himself, and I wished first to see you, for I know him!"

"Indeed? Who is he?"

"The master of the elegant home on the hill above; but I knew him when he was poor."

"Ah! you are sure?"

"Yes, queen, for I never forget a face,"

and for half an hour the young gypsy and the queen talked together.

Then the young man left the schooner and walked away from the camp.

It was late in the afternoon when he returned, and the Gypsy Queen asked quickly:

"Well?"

"I know much to tell you," was the reply.

Half an hour after word came off to the vessel that a lady, one of the two who had been there the day before, wished to see her.

She was admitted to the schooner's cabin, and rising the Gypsy Queen asked: "How can I serve you, lady?"

The visitor was Kathleen Carrol, who, not caring to have Violet hear aught that the Gypsy Queen might tell her, had come alone.

"I am a doubter of your power, Gypsy Queen, so have come to test it, by asking you to tell me something of the past, something of the future."

"Why recall the past, lady, which has had more of bitterness for you than of joy?"

"Ah! You know this?"

"I could read that much in your face. You have been rich, and you are poor. You have loved, but loved one unworthy of you, while now you struggle hard to cast him out of your heart. Your hand, lady—yes, I see that you gave your hand in faith, and to one who was faithless."

"Your future, lady, is with you. There are two paths, one to contentment, and that you must go alone; the other leads to sorrow, if you take another into your life with you."

"I can say no more, lady."

"You need not, for what you have said gives me faith in a power I had been skeptical of before."

"Here, queen, let me offer you this and bid you farewell."

Kathleen handed her a gold piece, and turned away, and Soto put her on shore.

She went along the bank near the river, and thus missed Randolph Norman, who was coming down the path from the highway.

Soto recognized him, and, approaching, saluted politely, while he said:

"The queen is at home to-day, senor. Would you see her?"

"Yes," and Norman, stepping into the boat at Soto's request, was rowed out to the schooner.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOR GOLD.

For some reason known to himself, Randolph Norman would have preferred not going on board the schooner, but he was told by Soto that only there could the Queen of the Sea Gypsies read the destinies of those who came to her.

An unbeliever in such superstitious nonsense as "fortune telling," yet Norman felt an irresistible desire to test the powers of the seeress.

Impelled perhaps by the same impulse that had prompted Kathleen to visit her he had gone.

The old queen seemed to give him the horrors, and he felt sorry that he had come.

But there was no backing out after going thus far, so he took the seat placed for him.

"I have come, Gypsy Queen, to know what you can tell me about my future," said the master of Glen Idle.

"Do you come with faith?" was the decisive demand.

"I confess to but little faith, for I am an unbeliever in about everything, but what have you to tell me?"

"Of the past?"

"If you can give me any facts of my past I may be the better able to judge of the future."

"Your hand, please, gentleman."

He gave it to her, and she glanced fixedly at it for full a minute.

"You are married," she said.

"No."

"I say you are married, though the world may not be aware of the fact."

He colored, but made no reply, and she continued:

"Your marriage was a sorrow to her you wed, rather than to yourself; it should not have been, but sorrow came of it."

"You are guessing, gypsy."

"Am I? Then the same power to guess shows me that you nearly lost your life, and a woman saved you from death."

"Bah! This is all guesswork for the past, so tell me, if you can, what my future is to be?" he said impatiently.

"You may not like it if I tell you the truth, any more than you did what I told you of the past!"

"Let me hear at least what you have to say," he demanded, impelled by her strange revelation regarding his past.

"Well, you are leading a double life."

"How do you mean?" he asked with a start.

"You are not true to yourself, or to others, and some day you may rue the possession of the riches you now enjoy—some day it will be you who will suffer, where others now suffer through you—some day —"

"Bah! I want to hear no more of your cant, for I did not seek you to have you prate absurdly of the past and like a magpie of the future!"

"Why then did you seek me?"

"To seek your aid."

"In what?"

"Are we alone?"

"Wholly."

"I will pay you handsomely for what you do, and that is what you want."

"Yes, gold is the God of the Gypsies," she said, with a sneer.

"There is a person in my way."

"Yes, a woman."

"Again, you guess well."

"Do you wish her to be put out of the way?"

"I do."

"In the grave?"

"Yes, or the bottom of the sea."

"Who is the woman?"

"Will you do the work?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When do you wish it done?"

"Within the week; but, mind you, it must appear to be an accident, for there must be no suspicion of foul play."

"Trust me for that."

"How will you get rid of her?"

"She is not far away?"

"She lives near."

"Does she row on the river?"

"Often."

"This is the season of storms?"

"Yes."

"Then it is all easy enough. So tell me who she is, and leave the rest to me."

"Your price?"

"Fifteen hundred now, and a thousand more when she is dead."

"I will give it; and pay you the first installment now."

He counted out the money, said a few words to her in a low tone, and left the cabin. Soto had gone from the deck, but the young and beautiful girl was there. Randolph Norman gazed at her with surprise and admiration, for her form was exquisite and her face, though dark, was most lovely.

"Soto asked me to put you ashore, sir," she said with a slight accent, and in a voice rich and melodious.

"I am certainly well pleased at the change, fair girl," he said, with a smile, and he stepped into the boat, while she, standing in the stern, sculled rapidly ashore.

"I must see her again, for what a little beauty she is," he muttered to himself as he walked homeward.

As he reached the steps he met a boy descending, and started as he recognized a telegraph messenger.

"What could he want there?" he wondered.

But, ere he could question him, Kathleen came out upon the piazza, her face white,

her eyes burning with a strange fire in them.

In her hand she held an open telegram, which she handed to him in silence.

He grasped it with a strange feeling of dread, and saw that it was addressed to Kathleen.

What he read sent every particle of color from his face, for the telegram read:

"Your brother Bennett died to-day. The wound after all was fatal. Come at once!"

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK IN VIRGINIA.

In the little burying ground of Catonsville, Maryland, a few miles out from the City of Baltimore, a group stood around an open grave and a clergyman was reading the burial service over the body of Bennett Carrol.

Around the grave were many with sympathy for the mourning mother and sister of the dead son and brother, but no one seemed to know much about them.

It was said in Catonsville, where they had a little cottage home, that they were from Virginia, and had come to the village, to live, some time before—the mother, son, and daughter.

The son had been brought there an invalid. Soon after the mother had gone away, leaving the sick one under care of his sister and an old negress.

Then the mother had returned and the daughter had gone away.

No letter ever had been mailed in Catonsville, so the village Postmaster said (and village Postmasters are authority on all questions of gossip,) to the daughter, so letters for her must have been mailed from Baltimore.

A year the daughter was gone nearly; then she had returned for the burial of her brother.

A rumor, discussed as coming from the village doctor, reported that the young man had died from the effects of a wound received some eighteen months or so before his death, but how wounded no one could learn, for it was a matter upon which the gossips never ventured to question Mrs. Carrol.

The young man had slowly faded out of life, and yet, one recent day, when death seemed yet some weeks away, he had said:

"Mother, telegraph Kathleen to come to me at once, for I am going."

He had said just what was true, for within half an hour he was dead, and the stage-driver, who drove between Catonsville and the city, took in a telegram telling the sister to come to see her brother buried.

All this surrounded the family with mystery; but neither mother nor sister revealed their secret, and Phillis had not a word to say when questioned, except that "people would get richer if dey tended to dere own business and let other folks' affairs alone."

The sister came, and the two, mother and daughter, with old Phillis, stood in silence watching the coffin as it was lowered into the grave.

"He has been a great sufferer; it is better that the end has come. He is at rest."

So had said the mother when the clergyman spoke soothing words to her.

"It was cruel that he should be taken thus; but the end is not yet."

So had said Kathleen to the clergyman, and, dry-eyed, she had turned from the grave.

They went back to the little home, and in the gathering twilight sat out upon the piazza, gazing down upon the grand city, six miles away.

"Now, Kathleen, all is over," said the mother sadly.

"Yes, mother; but will you remain here?"

"Oh, no; I have a good offer for the cottage, of considerable more than I gave for it, and, as the gentleman who bought Rose Hill has been unable to pay

for it, I shall take it back, paying the money he gave us on it, and yet having enough over to fit the home up again, while I will have the old servants back again."

"It was my old home, Kathleen; as you know—my birthplace, and I long to go back there."

"Mother, I am glad to hear you say this, and I have a thousand dollars laid by which is at your service, if you need it."

"And you, my child, will go with me?"

"Ah, no! My duty is where I am."

"With that man?"

"Yes, mother; for the end is not yet."

"You would have had me believe, Kathleen, that he was not the man you had loved, but his brother; but I knew the truth, and how you tried to shield him."

"It is strange what love will make a woman do."

"Do not upbraid me, mother; but I must go back, for I cannot leave Glen Idle, and I would not give up Violet for the world, for she is as dear to me now as though she were my own child."

"She is a lovely girl, and I only hope that he will do the right part by her, and by you."

"He will, he must, mother! I am not the innocent girl I was three years ago. I am a woman, and I know the power I have and I shall use it to gain the end I seek. I know all that Mr. Norman is, and he shall betray no other trust. I am just biding my time, mother."

"Then you do not love him, as I believed, for I know that he had pledged himself to make you his wife publicly within the year after your going there, and that time is nearly ended."

Laughter was a strange sound there, in that home of death, and it fairly frightened old Phillis; but it came from the lips of Kathleen at her mother's words; yet it was not the laughter of merriment. It was in mockery.

"Love him? Have you forgotten what he tried to make me, mother? Have you forgotten that we have just placed my brother in the grave, and whose hand it was that took his life? No, I do not love him, mother—I hate him."

Mrs. Carrol started at the words, and betrayed her surprise. She had believed Kathleen won to submission by the honied words of Randolph Norman, and so had Bennett Carrol thought.

It was to have a talk with his sister before he died that he had so suddenly asked that she be telegraphed for.

The two had never spoken together of Randolph Norman. She had come to him when wounded, and handing her the letter which had forced him to act, he had simply said: "I fought to avenge your honor, Kathleen."

After that the subject had never been mentioned between them. When his mother had returned and Kathleen had gone to Glen Idle, he had understood that it was to have Norman, in the end, make her his wife before the world.

Of all else, he knew nothing, and the daughter alone knew the secret of it all. The mother suspected much, but Kathleen knew all.

"Then you return to Glen Idle?"

"Yes, as soon as I have gone back with you to the old home and helped you to set things to rights. I can give you a week, mother."

They lost no time, and the next day the cottage was sold, the household goods packed up and shipped, and Mrs. Carrol and Kathleen, accompanied by old Phillis, returned to Virginia.

With money to buy back the place, and mother and daughter dressed in deep mourning, the neighbors were anxious to welcome them, for somehow the rumor prevailed that Kathleen had married the millionaire she had run off from home with, and was living in grand style in New York.

After one week at home, Kathleen returned North—returned to meet her destiny.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GAMBLER PLOTTING.

When Randolph Norman read the telegram announcing the death of Bennett Carrol and calling Kathleen home at once, he was more deeply moved than he cared to admit even to himself.

Not that he had caused the death of the young man; ah, no! that gave him not a pang. What troubled him was the fear that the death might get him into further trouble.

He had already plotted to get the sister out of the way, and so had no compunctions of conscience on that score.

Would Bennett's death cause inquiries that might lead toward him as the one who had killed him?

Could he, with the affair going the rounds of the papers, hope to prove that he was Dr. Dudley Norman, and not Randolph Norman?

His striking resemblance to his brother would deceive many, it was true; but there were some whom he could not deceive if they should be called upon to testify.

And getting into the papers, would it not reach the eyes of Dr. Curtis Carter of Buffalo, and also of Dr. Antisane of the Electric Cure-All Sanitarium?

True, personal reasons, such as a hundred dollars a week for board, might keep the Cure-All man quiet, especially with an additional incentive to prudence, and the doctor might silence or get rid of the nurse, Mr. Frederick Overton, if he should read the sensation in the papers; but, there was Dr. Curtis Carter, who would not be a party to a downright fraud knowingly.

If he had diagnosed the case wrong, it would be his misfortune to have done so under the existing circumstances, and doctors were as liable to err, and only find out their mistakes when the patient was six feet under ground, as were lawyers to discover theirs after their victim had been hanged.

In thinking over all these things, Randolph Norman felt that the lines were being drawn close about him.

Walter Vernon was in an insane asylum, it was true, by his own will, but then, he was deceived in the man whom he had made his representative, and the guardian of his child.

Dr. Dudley Norman was the inmate of a private asylum or sanitarium, under the false pretense that he was not of sane mind, and was thus defrauded of what would have been justly his.

Kathleen—already his lawful wife—knew him as he really was, and was governess to the daughter of the man whom he was deceiving and defrauding.

Mrs. Carrol also must know much of his secret, and then there was Bennett Carrol, who had just died by his hand.

He was certainly getting hedged in, and he saw that his only hope was in Kathleen—the woman he had so heartlessly mistreated and wronged.

His vanity led him to believe that she, still, in her heart of hearts, loved him, and he could mold her to his wishes.

"I must use her to save myself, even if I have to have a public marriage here, and get rid of her afterward. It will be time enough then to think of winning over little Violet. She is very young yet, and, brought up by me, she will naturally become devoted to me, and by the time she is eighteen, at the rate I am going, I will need her money to live on, for my share of the estate cannot last always, unless I am more lucky in my card playing."

"At the present pace, I will go through it in six or seven years. But, then, I will get as much more by marrying Violet. Now I must get Kathleen under my control. I will send for her."

He rang the bell and ordered the servant to ask Miss Randolph to please come to the library.

"She's gone, sir."

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir; she was after getting a tele-

gram that her brother had died suddenly, and went at once."

"But no carriage came to the door."

"No, sir; she walked to the station along with Miss Violet, and Bob carried her valise, sir."

"Tell Miss Violet when she returns to come to me," and the impostor threw himself back in his chair in no very pleasant mood.

He knew that the train was already gone, and it would be impossible to catch the Express at seven, so as to see her. He must await the consequences.

In a short while Violet returned and entered the library.

Her face was flushed from her walk, but her eyes were red from weeping.

"Oh, Gardy! isn't it awful about poor, dear Miss Randolph's brother? She loved him so dearly, and has talked about him so often to me."

"It is very sad, child; but I had no idea that she was going before that 7 o'clock train," and Norman glanced uneasily at his ward, for he was fearful she had been told something about him by her governess.

"No, she could not have caught the Express if she had waited, so she went at once, with only a small satchel."

"Gardy, Mr. Randolph was shot, was he not?"

"Who said so?"

"Miss Randolph told me long ago he had been wounded in a duel and could never get well."

"Yes, I have heard something of it."

"How badly his murderer must feel when he knows Bennett is dead, for it is murder to kill a man, is it not, Gardy?"

"Yes, except in self-defense," and the sweat stood in beads upon the forehead of the man who was undergoing torture under this fair young inquisitor.

"Well, Miss Randolph told me that her brother had been shot in a duel with a man who had done him a great wrong, and I know she looked upon him as a murderer, and I hope he will learn that his victim is dead and that poor Mr. Carrol's ghost will haunt him. I do hope so, indeed, Gardy!"

"This is cruel of you, Violet, for the other man may have been right; you have only heard one side of the story."

"I heard Miss Randolph's side, and I would believe her before any one, even before you, Gardy."

The man gazed at the girl almost in horror.

Did she know the truth, or was it all merely an accident?

To change the subject as soon as possible, he asked:

"Did Miss Randolph say when she would return, Vi?"

"In about a week, she thought, and we must be so sweet to her when she comes back, as to make her forget her sorrows all she can."

"She will feel better to have her brother dead, for she said that he has suffered untold torture for over a year, and she has wondered if the one who had shot him could sleep, knowing the agony he had caused him to endure."

"Yes, we must be very sweet to Miss Randolph when she comes back; and do you know, Vi, I have a secret to tell you."

"Oh, I love secrets, Gardy, so tell me quick!"

"I love Miss Randolph and am going to make her my wife."

"Oh, won't that be splendid! She'll be my mother then, and I do love her so! But, will she have you?"

The man was disappointed, for he was in hopes that, young as Violet was, she would be sorry to have him get married.

"Yes, she will have me, for I have asked her, and now it is a secret no longer."

"Because I know it, Gardy?"

"Oh, no; but because it might as well be known to all now, for the marriage must soon take place."

"Thank you for nothing, Gardy, for you did not tell me soon enough, so as to

put me to the test of keeping it; but I hope Miss Randolph will be happier, for somehow I think she is unhappy; and, Gardy, you don't seem to be cheerful like you used to be. Is it because you are in love?"

"My! if love makes one wretched, I guess I'll keep out of it," and Violet left her guardian to his own reflections.

CHAPTER XIX.

MISTRESS OF GLEN IDLE.

One day, Violet was delighted at receiving a letter from her governess.

It was written from the cottage at Catonsville, the evening after the funeral, and told her all about the death of her brother and his burial, as also that they had decided to go back to Virginia.

Her guardian was not mentioned in it, and Violet handed it to him to read.

But, though not mentioned in it, Randolph Norman breathed more freely; it gave him a respite for yet a while.

Three days after another letter came. It was dated at Rose Hill, Virginia, and inclosed a sketch of the house and the scenery about it. It told Violet to expect her at Glen Idle in a few days.

She stated that her mother had decided to purchase back again the old house, and, with the old servants, to make it her dwelling place for the rest of her life.

"I was glad of this," the letter went on to say, "for the dear place is where I have passed many happy hours of my girlhood. In truth, I only knew happiness while here, and any sorrows that have been mine have come after my leaving Rose Hill."

"You will see, by the sketch I send, that a beautiful brook runs in front of the house, just across the highway, and beyond are the mountains, while we look from the piazza miles up and down the valley."

"One day, some years ago, this brook burst out of its banks, swollen by a freshet in the mountains, and it swept over the road."

"I was standing looking at it rush along, when I beheld a man struggling in the torrent, and as I swim well, I at once ran in and grasped the hand of the drowning man."

"He was a splendid swimmer, brave and strong, but the bridge two miles above had broken in with him, and he could struggle no longer, so I saved his life."

"I could not help loving him, Violet, he was so handsome, so courtly; but he was unworthy of my love, and loving him brought only sorrow and suffering to me."

"Beware that you never love unworthily."

This little bit of the life of her governess deeply impressed Violet.

She read it to her guardian, and when she looked up his stern face fairly startled her.

"Why, Gardy, how cross you look!" she had to exclaim.

"Do I? Well, I was thinking."

"Thinking, and I reading to you? Well, I'll not tell you any more of my dear teacher, and perhaps I ought not to have told you that. Ah! you are jealous because she has loved some one else before she did you!" and, with a laugh, the little lady retreated to her own room.

"Curse her! This looks as though she intended to tell the child all! But, so far, she has done nothing, and no legal notice has been taken of her brother's death, so I am safe. Her mother has returned to Virginia to live, and she herself is coming back to Glen Idle."

"So far, good! But I must let the intended marriage be known, and then, if ought befalls her, why, I will have the deepest sympathy of the community, and even her mother can have no clue to fix suspicion on me."

"Then, with Kathleen gone, I must work to get rid of Dudley, for he is costing me fearfully, just for his maintenance."

"I wonder if that sly nurse could not arrange it for me, so as to let him go off slowly? The fellow looks like a villain, and five thousand cash might tempt him to do it!"

"After that, I would have to get rid of him, of course; but I will give him a place here with me as valet and can soon put him out of the way."

"With Kathleen gone, Dudley in his grave, and the mine out of the way, I would have nothing further to fear."

"But, first, I must publicly marry Kathleen."

So ran the thoughts of this veritable Lucifer.

Three days after, Kathleen Carrol arrived at Glen Idle. She was not in mourning, for she would not carry her grief into the presence of sunny-hearted little Violet.

Kathleen at once sought the master at Glen Idle in his library, when she had returned to her duties.

He had not dared go out to meet her, so pretended to be taking a nap in his easy chair, for Violet peeped in, and found him apparently asleep.

When Kathleen had laid aside her wraps, she went to him.

He arose and extended his hand; but she did not raise it, and said, coldly:

"I have returned to my duties, Dr. Norman."

"I am glad to see you back again, Kathleen," he said, in an embarrassed way.

"My brother died from the effects of the wound you gave him, I wish you to know, and now the matter need not be referred to again."

"But there is another thing I wish to refer to, Kathleen, and that is to remind you that the year is nearly gone."

"You refer to the year in which you were to openly claim me as your wife?"

"Yes."

"You need not worry about that, for now I shall not consent to the mockery."

"Not consent!" he cried, almost in terror.

"No; for I stopped in Baltimore, and there stands the record of our marriage registered, so that makes me your wife, should occasion arise to prove it."

"I prefer to be known as Miss Randolph here, and so shall remain as the governess of Violet."

"Not unless you openly become my wife must you remain."

"Randolph Norman, I shall do as seems to me best in this matter. You cannot frighten me. You shall enter into no plot against Violet, that I have vowed."

"I love her as though she were my own child, and I shall remain with her until her father again takes her under his own charge, or she marries some man worthy of her."

"If you dismiss me, I shall not go, and I defy you to put it to the test. Let us be outwardly friends, but there is nothing between us but a grave—yes, the grave also of a departed love, hope, and honor."

Without another word, Kathleen left the library, and if she heard him call after her in pleading tones, she did not heed. Whatever Randolph Norman might call himself, "Miss Randolph, the governess," was certainly mistress at Glen Idle.

CHAPTER XX.

LOST.

Of course it got around that Kathleen, or "Miss Randolph," was to marry the master. The servants were full of it, and were secretly rejoicing at a coming wedding.

Though they all were much attached to her, something in the manner of the governess forbade familiarity from any one, save sweet Violet.

All the servants knew, of course, that Miss Randolph had gone home to attend the funeral of her brother, and one and all offered her their sympathy upon her return.

Not one of them suspected that Miss

Randolph was the daughter of the former governess and housekeeper, Mrs. Carrol. Not even Violet knew this.

Not a servant had the temerity to ask Miss Randolph about her coming marriage, and even Violet would not speak of it, knowing her grief.

So matters went on at Glen Idle for a few weeks after Miss Randolph's return.

Randolph Norman appeared low spirited; but that was set down as sorrow for the grief of his intended bride.

Twice he had essayed to speak with Kathleen again, but she had at the first attempt treated him with silence; the second time she had turned upon him like a tigress, with this outburst:

"Randolph Norman, dare to refer to that subject again and I vow to you I will have you arrested as my brother's murderer, as a man living a double life, and will expose you in all your guilt."

"Be warned or the axe suspended over your head will fall at once!"

As she said this, the innocent Virginia girl of three years before had developed into a woman, full of hatred and revenge.

The next day he announced at breakfast that he would have to go to the city for a week, and departed on the noon train.

The truth was the fit was upon him to drown his thoughts in drink and gambling.

He always put up at a fashionable hotel near the club, and was wont, when in the city, to drink heavily and play with recklessness.

He had the name of being a very rich man.

The club he belonged to was not a ultra-fashionable one; but one that had a great many free-and-easy-men-about-town in it.

No one suspected of a dishonorable act was allowed a membership; but there were many belonging to the "All Night Club" who were certainly not ornaments to society.

A stern man, friendly with few, and not fond of yachting, horses, or sports, "Doctor Dudley Norman" was not a very popular man, save as a gambler and companion at dinner.

He never cared to eat a meal alone, so always invited some member to join him, and all were glad to do so, for he was an epicure and the wine flowed freely.

Yet he always went to the opera or theatre alone, and drove or rode in the park without companionship.

But the "Doctor" was known to be a great gambler, and had very coolly lost as high as five thousand on a game without flinching.

The club men counted it up against him one night, after he had lost heavily, and gone to his hotel, and they made it amount to about sixty thousand dollars in losses the past two years, while his winnings had amounted to a quarter of that sum.

Arriving in the city, when he ran down for a week, to drown his thoughts, Doctor Norman, as all knew him and supposed him to be, went to dine at the All Night Club the second day of his stay in town, after he had created an appetite by a drive in the park, and sundry absinthes at the Mount Morris.

He caught sight of only one member as he went to the cloak room, and said:

"Come, Bonnell, join me at dinner, won't you?"

"Just came in to dine, thank you, doctor, so I will join you with pleasure," replied Roger Bonnell, a young man who belonged to the club, and was supposed to be an author, though no one remembered to have ever seen anything he had written.

He was not a regular attendant, but always paid his dues regularly, and now and then had been known to gamble a little.

A good-looking fellow, well dressed, pleasant mannered, and seemingly rather indifferent to the ways of the world,

but a good talker and entertaining as a dinner companion.

The dinner passed off pleasantly, and, as they lighted their cigars, a servant from the club office came in with a telegram.

Norman slightly started as it was handed to him, and there was just the slightest tremor to his fingers as he opened it; while seeming to think that Bonnell had observed his nervousness, he remarked:

"I always dread a telegram, many as I have received."

"I— My God!"

He dropped the telegram and the quick eye of Roger Bonnell read it at a glance: It read:

"Come home at once! Poor dear Miss Randolph is lost!" "Violet."

CHAPTER XXI.

A BOLD GAME TO PLAY.

"No bad news, I trust, Dr. Norman?" queried Roger Bonnell as though he had not had the telegram which Norman had dropped upon the table.

In an instant Norman was himself again, as he responded: "I sincerely hope not so bad as this message would imply, for it is from my little ward, a miss of thirteen, and tells me that her governess is lost, whatever that may imply."

"Ah! her governess?"

"Yes, and when I add that I am engaged to the lady whom my ward reports as lost, you can understand my distress. But I must say good night, Bonnell, and be off at once for home."

He grasped his friend's hands and hastily left the club.

It was nearly nine o'clock when he sprung out of the carriage at Glen Idle, and beheld a crowd of men there.

Violet met him as he entered the door, and cried:

"Oh, Gardy! She is gone. Poor Miss Randolph!"

"Come, Violet, tell me just what has happened, for I could learn nothing from your telegram," and he threw himself into an easy chair, shading his face from the lamp.

"She went out for a row in the river, Gardy, just before sunset, and a squall came over the Palisades and the waves upset her boat, for the Gypsy Soto saw it floating bottom upwards and went out and brought it in."

"The gypsies had seen poor Miss Randolph rowing in the river, and were fearful for her safety when the squall came up, for it was so sudden and severe."

"I have had men searching for her ever since, Gardy; but I am so glad you have come, for you know just what to do," and tears rolled down the cheeks of Violet as she spoke.

Randolph sprang to his feet and begun to pace to and fro. There was much to be done. Mrs. Carrol must be at once notified, and in such a way as not to have it reflect upon himself.

So he turned and wrote a telegram, worded as follows:

"I have fears that Miss Randolph has been drowned, though still hope for the best. Can you come at once to Glen Idle? Answer!" Dudley Norman."

This was dispatched from the station, and then Norman formed the men who had gathered about into search parties to try and find the body.

Soto organized a party among the Sea Gypsies, and went to work, diving deep where he had picked up the pretty little rowing skiff, and also dragging the bottom with pile-hooks attached to weights.

But the night passed, and the body was not found, and at daylight Norman retired to his room for rest, to be awakened at near noon by his valet with a telegram.

It read simply: "I leave immediately. Answer me on Train No. 5 out of Philadelphia, if there is hope."

The answer was sent as directed.

"Not yet found. Will meet train on arrival." "Dudley Norman."

As Mrs. Carrol stepped from the train at the depot in Jersey City, Norman met her.

Her face was white and haggard, but she was calm, and did not take his offered hand, while she asked in a husky voice:

"Is she dead?"

"Alas! I fear so."

"Tell me all!"

As they rode out through the city to Glen Idle, the desolate mother heard all.

Her manner softened somewhat towards the man when she learned that he was away from home at the time of the loss of her daughter, for a terrible suspicion had come into her heart that he had had something to do with her death.

"My dear Mrs. Carrol," he said, in a low, earnest tone, seeming to understand just what her thoughts were:

"It has pained me deeply in the past to know that you mistrust me, and, under all circumstances, I cannot condemn you for so doing.

"I saw that you were suspicious of me when you were at Glen Idle, and afterwards I learned the cause—that you believed me to be Randolph Norman, and so arranged that your daughter should come in your place so as to confront me with what you believed my crimes.

"She came, and she, too, believed me to be Randolph, at first, and boldly accused me of the crimes of which he is guilty.

"Now it was at my urgent entreaty that your daughter remained at Glen Idle, and took the name of Miss Randolph, for I was determined to find my brother and prove at least that I was innocent.

"What your daughter may at least have deemed me, or have said to you, I do not know; but I wish to tell you that I have found my brother and—"

"Do you mean this, Doctor Norman," cried the widow, eagerly.

"I have, madam, as I said, found my brother, and I hoped long ago to have convinced both you and your daughter that you had greatly wronged me.

"But, alas! my poor brother's present condition accounts for the wild acts of his life, the crimes he committed, for he is the inmate of a mad house."

"My God! How terrible!"

"It is to me, certainly so; but I put detectives upon his track, found him, only to discover that he was mad.

"I consulted with the best specialists in brain diseases, and he has been under the care of the most skillful physicians, I hoping that he would regain his mind.

"But it is to no purpose; he is hopelessly insane.

"Despairing of his recovery, I had decided to take your daughter to visit him, that she might take from me the belief that I was the guilty one.

"Could she have seen him, seen how alike we are, and that one day he calls himself Dudley Norman and the next Randolph Norman, she would feel how his poor brain is wrecked.

"I fear that our nurse in childhood had much to answer for in this, as she was constantly mixing us up in our own minds as a joke.

"Why, something over a year ago I had a letter from him from California, signing himself by my name, and it was through that he was traced by the detectives."

"I recall the letter, sir," almost whispered Mrs. Carrol.

"Now, my dear madam, it is my wish that you see my brother, that you go to the asylum and talk with him, that you may have proof that I have been wronged, cruelly wronged, by your daughter, whom, I must tell you, I could not help loving with all my heart and soul."

His voice quivered, and Mrs. Carrol said earnestly, as she grasped his hand:

"I have wronged you, Doctor Norman, and so has my poor child.

"You are not guilty for your brother's crimes, and humbly I ask you to forgive me.

"No, no! Not for anything would I go to see your brother! It is not necessary, for I believe you now, and again ask your forgiveness."

"It is freely granted, my dear Mrs. Carrol; but we are nearing Glen Idle, and let me ask you if you do not think it best that your daughter should still be known as Miss Randolph, for—"

"Yes, it is better so."

"You know the house and the servants, so can take charge for the present, and your daughter can be spoken of as one most dear to you, for all know that you secured her in your place."

"Yes; but God grant she be not lost."

"Amen!" fervently said Norman, as the train stopped at the Glen Idle station.

CHAPTER XXII.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

With the coming of Mrs. Carrol, the search for Kathleen's body was renewed with two-fold vigor, and Randolph Norman, in the excitement of the moment, offer a reward of five thousand dollars for the finding of the body.

This naturally made people work with a greater will, and even the waters of the lower bay were patroled by boats hoping to find the body borne out upon the tide when it should rise from the depths.

Everybody felt the deepest sympathy for the Master of Glen Idle, for it was rumored that, in a few weeks, he was to have married the unfortunate governess.

No one thought of its being other than accident, and the idea of suicide seemed out of the question.

Still Mrs. Carrol feared that the excitement which Kathleen had gone through with of late, and the death of her brother might have brought on temporary aberration of the mind, and the poor girl have taken her own life in a fit of desperation.

Two weeks did Mrs. Carrol remain at Glen Idle, until all hope of finding the remains seemed to have passed away.

Then she said she must go home, and asked that Violet should go with her.

It was a good thought for Randolph Norman, for he wished to be out from under the scrutiny of the inquiring eyes of the young girl.

Not that she suspected him of the slightest wrong; but, then, she asked so many questions, and if his answers were not satisfactory she at once constituted herself an inquisitor.

Mrs. Carrol was anxious to have the little heiress accompany her, if only for a month. She had no longer any belief in the deception of Randolph Norman, but believed him to be the real Doctor Norman—the brother of the man who had wrought so much of misery to her and her's. Still she could but feel a certain restraint or reserve towards him, though she argued in her own mind that she was wrong in doing so.

So Mrs. Carrol and Violet started for Virginia, Norman escorting them to the train in Jersey City and seeing to their wants in everything, while he forced upon the lady what he was pleased to call the amount due her daughter for services as governess, and which Mrs. Carrol deemed to be about treble what was really due.

But Norman assured her that he was right, handed her the tickets which he had purchased, and the checks to the baggage, along with a box containing certain souvenirs he had purchased for the widow and Violet in the city, and then took his leave.

The "souvenirs" were an elegant watch and chain for Violet, and an order on a Baltimore marble cutter for a su-

perb monument, to cost not less than two thousand dollars, to be erected conjointly to the memory of her husband, son and daughter in the village churchyard near where she lived, for the body of Bennett Carrol had already been taken thither.

This touched Mrs. Carrol deeply, and she murmured:

"God bless him!"

Then she looked at a note that had escaped her attention, and read:

"I beg you to at once order the monument, for I wish to see it when I come to Virginia in a couple of months.

"And I have taken the liberty of having sent to you a good horse and barouche, along with Violet's riding horse, so you can drive about the mountains and enjoy yourselves.

"Dick, the footman, will carry the horses and barouche through, and left two days ago on the through freight train.

"If there is any service I can render, command me.

"Any news I get of your lost one, I will at once send you.

"Ever respectfully,

"Dudley Norman."

Such was the letter, and with tears in her eyes Mrs. Carrol murmured a prayer to Heaven for the Master of Glen Idle, while Violet said:

"It's just like Gardy, ever kind and thoughtful.

"What gallops I will have through the mountains, and we can take long drives together, too!

"Why, I am really happy at going with you, auntie."

And while the train rolled on southward, Randolph Norman returned to Glen Idle.

It looked desolate, indeed, without the presence of the beautiful governess, and the merry laughter of Violet.

But the master was glad to be alone. He wished to be without restraint, and so he had sent Jessie, Violet's maid, along with his ward, and as there was no one in the mansion but the stately butler and the woman who was to act temporarily as housekeeper, he was left pretty much to himself. The large reward caused him to be still bothered with visitors.

The gypsies still remained in their camp, and Soto seemed not to have given up the hope of finding the body, for daily he was seen out in his skiff, going along the shores of the river.

The first night of his stay alone, Randolph was not a happy man. He had dined late and had drunk deeply.

Then he told the butler to keep the hall lights burning and he would put them out, and that his valet was not to awaken him until noon.

The truth was the man began to feel the presence of the dead about him, and yet he preferred to be alone.

After dinner, he sat in his library, brilliantly lighted, and began to think.

The wine he had taken had not, as it would have done under ordinary circumstances, caused him to feel its effects.

His brain seemed strangely clear, more so than he could have wished, for he had intended to deaden his sensibilities.

He coned over his past, and how his passion for gambling had led him to squander money.

Then he had recklessly appropriated the funds of others entrusted to his care, and from bad to worse he had gone, until he had deceived Kathleen Carrol most basely, the woman to whom he owed his life, and had added to his crime by giving her brother a wound which in the end had proven fatal to him.

His accidental fortune in impersonating his brother, and the double life he was then leading, with that brother who had so often befriended him then suffering in a mad house, all this came upon him as he pondered there in his library.

He had lulled the suspicions of Mrs. Carrol; his brother must be put away,

and it would be safe if Walter Vernon never recovered.

In the midst of his meditations he started, for there came a tap upon the window.

He glanced up and beheld a face peering at him through the curtains, that were partly drawn aside.

It was a face that made him spring to his feet with a cry of alarm.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FEE OF ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

Alone in the room, and alone with his thoughts, the tap on the window had startled Randolph Norman as with a shock.

The window was open, and the curtains not half drawn, for the night was warm. He had heard no step upon the broad piazza, but he sprang in alarm to his feet to behold a face gazing in upon him!

He saw at a second glance whose face it was, and then cried, sternly:

"Curse you! What do you want here?"

"Never curse a gypsy, for you know how like chickens curses are; they go home to roost."

"How did you get here?"

"Walked."

"But into my grounds?"

"Over the iron gate."

"And the dogs never tore you to pieces?"

"Oh, no; dogs never attack a gypsy."

"Well, what do you want?"

"To talk business."

"I have nothing to talk to you about."

"Oh, yes, you have."

"Well, what is it?"

"Let me come inside the room and I will tell you."

"The window is open," said the man, sullenly; and the next moment, taking this as an invitation, the curtains were drawn back and the midnight visitor entered.

It was the old Queen of the Sea Gypsies! She was a weird-looking creature in her fantastic dress and long white hair, as she stood there beneath the glare of the lights.

"Be seated," said Norman, in a tone of sarcasm, and with mock politeness.

The woman took him at his word and sunk into a luxurious chair.

"Did any one see you come here?"

"Oh, no; I am particular in my dealings with gentlemen."

"Do any of your people know that you came?"

"No. Why should they?"

"How is it that you came past my dogs, which are noted for being vicious, and are kept to drive river pirates off?"

"I am not a river pirate."

"The dogs do not know that."

"Oh, yes; dogs have more sense than some human beings. Yours came to the gate and saw me enter, yet did not disturb me."

"It is strange."

The woman laughed lightly, and Norman quickly demanded:

"Why have you come?"

"For my pay."

"Your pay?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Why, you already have fifteen hundred dollars of my money!"

"I know, and I was to get one thousand more when the work was done."

"But, you never did what you agreed to, though I confess it was not your fault."

"Oh, yes, I did it."

"Did what?"

"Got rid of her."

"You? Why, she was upset in her boat by the storm that suddenly came up."

"Oh, no; you are mistaken; she was riding the storm well, and showing great pluck, so would easily have reached the shore, but for an accident."

"And that accident was the capsizing of her boat?"

"Yes, by the hands of a Sea Gypsy."

"Ha! Do you mean this?"

"It is true. Soto did the work, and he brought the boat ashore and kept it as a witness that the storm had upset her boat."

"So you claim the reward for having done the work?"

"I do, from having one of my people do it, by my order."

"One thousand more, I promised you?"

"Yes, one thousand more."

"And there is no doubt about her death?"

"Can a human being live beneath the water for weeks?"

"But are you sure she drowned?"

"Where is she, if she has not?"

"True; only the body was not found."

"So much the better, for it keeps her grave from haunting you."

The man shuddered, and the Gypsy Queen added:

"Is it any wonder that a body should not be found, when the tide runs out like a mill race, and the sea is near?"

"Why, the tide, when the body rose, carried it out, doubtless by night, in a few hours from here through the Narrows and well out to sea."

"Very probable; so I will pay you your price; but remember, this ends it, for there are to be no more calls upon me."

"I never take pay twice for the same work."

"And who else than yourself knows of this—this—work?"

"Soto, as I said—Soto, my son."

"Ah!" and Randolph Norman arose and went to what appeared to be a desk.

This desk swung out from one side on hinges, when a spring was touched, revealing an iron door a couple of feet wide by five in height.

This door was opened by a combination lock, revealing an iron vault, or safe, within, and here the valuables of Glen Idle were kept.

He seemed to have no fear from the Gypsy watching him, for that safe receptacle could not be opened by an expert burglar under many hours, and to touch it, without disconnecting a secret spring, known only to Mr. Vernon, Violet, and himself, would ring an alarm in the master's bed-room, the kitchen and the servants' quarters.

The money, one thousand dollars, was counted out and paid to the woman, who accepted it without thanks, and then turned her eyes upon the decanter of brandy with a wistful look that Randolph could not ignore.

"Will you have a glass of brandy?" he asked, willing to conciliate her all in his power.

"I will, for the master of Glen Idle drinks a liquor a poor Gypsy, even a queen, can know not the taste of."

"Your health, sir! and may these spirits be the only kind that ever haunt you!"

He shuddered at the toast, but bowed, and drinking off the liquor, the Gypsy Queen started towards the window.

"One minute."

"Well, sir."

"How much longer will you remain about here?"

"We will leave within the week."

"To go where?"

"Whither the winds carry us. We never sail against a wind; we go with it."

"Ah! then I suppose I shall never see you again."

"The world is large, sir; but men often cross each other's path in it."

"True. Good-by."

She bowed with a strange grace and glided out through the window.

Norman listened, but there was no sound of a bark from his dogs, and all was quiet.

When the butler came into the room in the morning, he found the lights still burning and the decanter empty.

"The Master made a night of it, but then he's in sorrow," the man servitor said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SECOND NIGHT OF HORROR.

It was noon when the Master of Glen Idle arose to his breakfast.

Jessop, his valet, called him just at twelve, and after a bath, a stiff brandy and soda, and some coffee, Norman felt quite himself.

"This won't do," he muttered, as he walked out into the grounds, after his noonday breakfast.

"This will not do, for I shall break down under it. I must drink less and keep better hours. I have little to dread now, or will have, in fact, nothing, after I have seen that sleek rascal, Frederick Breton, my brother's attendant."

"Yes, all will go well then, and Old Vernon, too, will drop off in the course of time."

"If I have spent my share, by the time I marry Violet, say, in five or six years, what she has will enable us to live splendidly, and I will be willing to settle down, having sowed my wild oats."

"But there is some work to be done yet, and it then comes down to only a question of conscience. I guess I can school myself to forget, though devils! what a time I had of it last night!"

"I had the horrors."

"I must school myself against all this, and be surprised and startled at nothing—oh! There is Bludso, and I'll ask him about those infernal dogs."

He called to his head man as he saw him crossing the yard.

"Ho, Bludso! where are your dogs?"

"Chained, sir," answered the man, politely. "I always chain them up, sir, at six in the morning, you know, and turn them loose at half past nine, unless you are out, sir, or have company."

"And do you consider them good brutes?"

"I do, sir, the best in the land."

"Are they watchful?"

"Yes, sir; wide awake, for, you see, they sleeps all day."

"And would bite a stranger?"

"I'm the only one, sir, that they let in the mansion grounds of a night."

"And yet I think I saw a Gypsy in the grounds last night."

"Ah, Dr. Norman, there's the rub, for Gypsies dose hoodoo dogs."

"Hoodoo them?"

"Yes, sir, charms 'em, for I never see a dog as would bite a Gyp."

"No, sir, they seems to cow 'em down at will."

"Well, I fear those Gypsies may be looking around for no good, and if you see that tall, handsome young fellow they call Soto, and the old hag they call a Queen, in the grounds at night, shoot them!"

"Lordy, I'd not kill a Gyp, Doctor Norman, for ten years' service money. Why, they'd track me to death in no time!"

"Well, I am sure one was in the piazza last night, looking in at me in the library, and so I fear they mean trouble. But, never mind; I'll watch them, Bludso, as you are afraid to."

"I am, sir, for a fact, for I knows 'em, and these Sea Gyps is worse than any other kind."

Norman said no more and strolled on about the grounds.

Later on he took a drive of a couple of hours, and returned to dinner at seven.

Then he again went to his library, determined to school himself into going to bed at midnight, and show his defiance of haunting spectres, by putting out the lights himself.

He drank less than the night before, ate with more relish, and, in dressing-gown and slippers, and with a fragrant cigar between his teeth, went to his library to glance over the papers, which of late he had neglected.

He turned from the papers to some accounts; then he took up a novel, and when the clock on the mantel, modeled after an old country church with its graveyard about it, chimed out, deep-

toned and mournful, the hour of midnight, he went promptly to retire.

As he did so there came a tap on the window, as upon the night before!

He started in spite of himself, and stepping there drew back the curtain.

It was Soto, the Gypsy.

"Ha! you are fortunate that I did not kill you, for I am armed. What do you wish, Gypsy?"

Soto stepped into the library, while Norman turned pale and trembled with rage.

It was so easy to kill him, and it would appear as though he had shot the Gypsy as a burglar.

But then, Bludso's words flashed across his mind—now they would track him to death, should he kill one of their tribe.

And again he would have the old Queen to deal with.

So he repeated:

"Well, what do you want here, and at night?"

"I thought you would prefer for me to come at night."

"And why so?"

"For my reward."

"What reward?"

"For the body."

"Great God! have you found the body?" gasped the Master of Glen Idle.

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"On the schooner."

"And all know it is there?"

"No; it is hidden away, and only the Queen and I know it is there. Will you come and see it?"

"No! no! no! that is, I do not wish to see it, for it has been so long in the water that—"

"Well, shall I carry it to sea, for we sail to-morrow, and drop it into the ocean with weights?"

"Yes, yes; it would be better so; far better."

"Give me my reward, then?"

"I will pay you a thousand, and—"

"You offered five thousand, so that is my price."

"I will not pay it."

"Then I will take it to the Chief of Police in the city, and tell him that you were willing to pay to have the lady die, and maybe there might have been foul play in regard to her death."

Norman fairly quivered with rage, and was pallid with fear; but he controlled himself and said, in an indifferent way:

"It would be the trumped story of a Gypsy, and no one would believe it; but, as I offered the reward, I suppose I must pay it, so will do so; but you are to take the body to sea and sink it."

"Yes; that is understood."

"You pledge yourself to this?"

"On the honor of a Gypsy."

Norman walked over to his desk, opened the safe and counted out the money, for he made it a rule always to have a large sum on hand, should he have to decamp suddenly.

The Gypsy received the money, and said simply:

"Good-by."

Another moment and he was gone, and once more did the lights burn all night, for to Randolph Norman it was another night of horror.

The next morning the blue-hulled schooner of the Sea Gypsies was not at her anchorage.

She had sailed under cover of the night.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DETECTIVE CALLS.

Having paid the reward, which he had offered for the body of Kathleen, Randolph Norman felt easier in mind.

He argued that the gypsies would not dare betray him, as they were the guilty ones, and they would doubtless be satisfied with the large sum which he had paid them and would never again cross his path. "This is as expensive as gambling," he muttered, as he recalled how much his sins had cost him.

But there was more work to be done before his mind could be at ease, and by this he, of course, meant the death of his brother and also the death of Walter Vernon. Only until that was done would there be no one to contest his claim to all of the estate, and the guardianship of Violet.

And after all this diabolical addition to his crimes he expected to be capable of enjoying the ease and position which great wealth only could secure.

If he bribed the nurse, Frederick Breton, to cut short the career of his brother, and afterward get him the place of an attendant on Walter Vernon to carry out the same fatal game, he reasoned that what the man would have done, certainly would keep him silent for his own safety, and having been liberally paid for his valuable services he doubtless would return to England to play the gentleman on his competence. But, this Lucifer's thoughts took shape: "if he gets troublesome, why, then, I must take him in hand myself, and thus destroy the last link of evidence against me, and I think I can do it without danger to myself."

"But, great God! what a fatal list it foots up! and all for gold!"

"And, how it all comes out just as lying does, for, as one lie told must be hidden by others, so one life taken must cost others to conceal it."

"And the expense?"

"It is fearful, for I shall not get off with less than fifty thousand dollars in bribes and expenses, and I have lost that much already over the gaming table."

"A hundred thousand gone, not for expenses either; but then it is to preserve to me a million."

So sat this master of evil musing in his library the next day after the sailing of the Sea Gypsies.

His reveries were broken in upon by the butler announcing a visitor.

"Why, Bonnell, this is a surprise," he said, as he recognized Roger Bonnell, the young author with whom he had been dining at the club when Violet's dispatch came announcing that her governess was lost.

He did not say to Bonnell that his visit was a pleasure, but a surprise.

It was a surprise, as he had never asked him to Glen Idle, and so he wondered why he had come.

"Yes, I thought I would surprise you; but I wished to have a talk with you on a little matter of business."

"I will be in the city soon, and—"

"Ah, yes, but I deemed it best to see you here, so ran up on the train and walked over from the station."

"You have a superb house here, Doctor Norman."

"Yes," and Norman was annoyed or worried, for what could have brought Bonnell up out of the city to see him?

"You must pardon me, Doctor Norman, for I knew I came to a home of mourning, as no word of your missing governess has been found, I suppose?"

"She is dead; I supposed you knew that."

"It was so stated."

"Yes, she was drowned, being caught out on the river in a sudden squall which overturned her boat."

"It was very sad, for she was certainly a very beautiful woman."

"Then you have seen her?" and Norman spoke quickly, almost excitedly.

"Oh yes; seen her quite often, I may say; and it is of Miss Randolph that I came to see you."

"Indeed? And what could you have had in common with my ward's governess, Mr. Bonnell?" asked Norman haughtily.

"The truth is, Norman, I had some business matters with her, and —"

"Business with Kathleen Carrol—"

"No, with Miss Randolph, I said."

"Ah, yes," and the man's face flushed at his mistake, while Bonnell continued:

"Now I would ask you, Doctor Norman, to swear to secrecy, if I tell you—"

that is, you will not betray me in any way."

"I cannot understand all this, Bonnell."

"I will explain if I receive your pledge."

"To do what?"

"Not to betray me."

"In Satan's name to whom can I betray you?"

"To any one. You will not let any one know about me, or what I may tell you?" he persisted.

"You speak like a madman, but I give you the pledge."

"Thank you; so, now, I will tell you that I came to you as the one to whom I deem it just I should apply to, under the circumstances, and of course you will do right in this matter, as I am not a rich man and cannot lose my money."

Norman gazed at the man as though arguing in his own mind if it was not best to call the butler and tell him his visitor had gone mad.

"Again, Mr. Bonnell, I ask you what you mean, for certainly I do not understand you?"

"Then I will be more explicit, sir, for I am anxious to be understood."

"The truth is, having your pledged word not to betray me, I am a detective!"

"A detective?" gasped Randolph Norman. "I thought you were an author, and a gentleman."

"An author I am, of certain police reports and histories of cases never yet compiled for publication. As to being a detective and not a gentleman that is a creed I do not acknowledge."

"But why am I honored with a call from a gentleman detective?"

"Well, sir, I received word one day from my chief to report to a lady at a hotel in the city. I did so, and found her to be Mrs. Kathleen Norman, née Carrol."

"Ah!"

"So she gave me her name, sir, and she desired me to begin work for her."

"I was to shadow a certain person who was a member of the All Night Club."

"I had the entrée there already, but I secured a membership and went to work."

"The lady was not rich, she said, and as my duties were not heavy, I made easy terms with her."

"I need not tell you that you were the person to be shadowed, Doctor Norman, and I received a note from her whenever you came to the city, and that set me on your track."

"I reported to her your doings while in the city, and so kept her posted regarding you, but must admit, save your heavy gambling, and a few other little indiscretions, I had little to make known."

"Now I had received from Miss Randolph, as she was known in this house, three hundred dollars, leaving a balance due me of six hundred dollars, and, as she died so suddenly, and I believe left no property for me to realize my claim. I naturally come to you to settle my bill."

"Here it is, sir, with services rendered, and amounts paid and due, so please give me a check for it and oblige."

Randolph Norman was inwardly cursing the man, but outwardly was calm and smiling, and he said almost pleasantly:

"Live and learn, Bonnell, is certainly a true adage, for I never suspected you once of being a detective."

"As to your bill I will pay it, and I can now understand why Miss Randolph set you to watch me."

"Confidentially we were engaged. She was the widow of my brother Randolph, and, hearing that I was a wild fellow, she wished to know of my doings when in the city."

"Six hundred you say is the bill?"

"Yes, sir," and the detective was slightly taken aback at the coolness of

the man, whom he expected would utterly refuse the demand.

Norman again went to his safe and counted out the money, handing it to the detective, who receipted in full, and then, for policy's sake, was invited to dinner.

When he departed from Glen Idle he voted Doctor Dudley Norman a "deuced good fellow, but sly as a fox, and wicked as a tiger if aroused."

But this was his own opinion, and to be kept to himself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NORMAN VISITS THE CURE-ALL HOSPITAL.

The night after the visit of Roger Bonnell the master of Glen Idle ascended to the second floor apartments of his ward and the governess.

There was no reason why he might not have gone into their rooms by day, being the master there; but he seemed to prefer to do so by night.

The visit of the detective had alarmed him.

When he had returned to Glen Idle in answer to the telegram from Violet calling him home he had on that night crept into Kathleen's room and slipped out of her desk a certain book which he knew she possessed.

That book he had hidden away in the folds of a portiere, so that, if its existence was known by Mrs. Carrol, and it was demanded by her, it could be found in the private apartment of the governess by a thorough search, and where Kathleen, it would be inferred, had put it.

But it had not been missed, and now Norman went upstairs after it.

He found it where it had been hidden, and, as Mrs. Carrol had taken away with her the things belonging to her daughter, the chamber looked deserted and desolate.

Then he went into Violet's chamber and made a search, but found nothing that seemed to occasion him anxiety; so, with the book from Kathleen's desk, he descended to his library.

It proved to be a large, well-bound diary, and what he read there of happenings the past few years, caused his face to pale.

The volume had a lock clasp upon it, and he had not the key, but it was opened by a wire, with the skill of a locksmith, as though he was not a novice in lock picking.

For several hours he looked over the diary, and then muttered to himself:

"This record would hang me, and I must keep it from all eyes. I will now put it away until I can look over it more carefully, and then destroy it."

He arose and put the volume in his safe and then returned to his easy chair and his musings.

"Yes, now go and see my brother, for that task must be next disposed of. I will start to-morrow," and on the morrow Glen Idle was closed, and its master was on his way northward.

The Electric-Magnetic Cure-all Hospital of Professor Antisane, M. D.—and with still other letters after his name, which might mean much, as well as very little—was an institution for the perfect cure of diseases of the brain.

The house had been rented as a "water cure," for there were some valuable springs on the place, and several houses and cottages, with a large mansion and a hundred acres of land.

The establishment was charmingly situated, the springs were really of medicinal value; and as the professor-doctor lived well, had good horses, a splendid orchard, and extensive gardens, the sanitarium was, apparently, one of good repute.

The doctor invited certain prominent physicians to rest themselves for a week or so at his home, and nine out of ten accepted, and the result was that they voted him a splendid host, his establishment a fine one in every particular, and

by their recommendations kept it filled with patients willing to pay big prices.

It was there, as we have seen, that poor Dudley Norman had been sent by the great specialist. He had the best quarters about the place, was attended by his own nurse, Frederick Breton, was allowed to fish, hunt, and enjoy himself at will, with the use of the well-filled library, and the fare was excellent.

He was improved in bodily health, and yet, when he found that he was being kept there against his will, he fretted greatly.

He appealed to Dr. Antisane, but that gentleman was sure that his patient was insane—had a malady, in fact, that could not be quickly cured.

All of this talk about himself, Dr. Antisane knew, were his ravings, for he had been "posted" by the rich brother who paid the bills so promptly, along with numerous "extras" that were a necessity at the Cure-all-Sanitarium.

When, therefore, "Doctor Dudley" Norman drove up to the door of his Cure-all establishment, Dr. Antisane recognized him and met him with open arms, so to speak, although the proprietor of the institution feared that he had come to take his brother away, and that meant five hundred dollars a month off his income!

"And how is my brother, sir?" asked Norman, as the doctor ushered him into the most charming of rooms.

"Well in general health, but he frets a great deal, and continually says he is being wronged, for you know he sticks to it that he is you, and that you, for some reason, are playing a traitor's part to him."

"Poor fellow! How demented he is! But I will have a talk with him, and if you would advise that I take him away—"

"By no means, sir! Under no circumstances would I advise it, for he is just beginning now to really improve in mind. A few months more, say a year, and then I feel sure, if his bodily health keep good, he will be entirely cured."

"You are right, sir, I think, so I shall leave him with you for yet awhile at least."

"Now I would like to see him."

"Certainly, sir," and Dr. Antisane led the way to the victim's quarters.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RANDOLPH VISITS THE VICTIMS.

In a large and comfortable sitting-room at the corner of the second floor in the stone mansion of Dr. Antisane's Cure-all establishment, sat Dudley Norman, the victim of an utterly conscienceless brother's audacity and lust for gold.

The room was almost luxuriously furnished, and commanded a view on two sides, from four windows.

Across the windows was iron grating, which gave it the appearance of a jail from without.

Up a fine valley the windows on one side looked, and across rolling hills to a range of mountains was the other view.

There were meadow lands, winding stream, farm houses here and there, forests and cultivated fields, all a very pretty picture.

Within the room was a piano, for the "patient" was a skilled musician; a bookcase well filled, a pair of foils and boxing gloves, with backgammon board, chess table and pack of cards.

Then there was an easel and an open portfolio containing numerous sketches of all kinds.

Opening into the room on one side was a bed chamber, handsomely fitted up, and adjoining it was a smaller one.

Certainly no one could complain of a lack of creature comforts who dwelt there.

Seated at the open window was the victim.

He was a very handsome man, so strikingly like his twin brother as to be readily mistaken for him, but now a shadow

rested upon his face, and there was a worried, hunted look in his eyes.

A key turned in the door, and his attendant entered, but he did not look around as Frederick Breton came in.

Mr. Breton looked just as he had when seen last in Buffalo—smooth-faced, smiling, and sleek.

"Mr. Norman, you 'ave ha visitor."

"Ah! a visitor—for me?" and the "patient" started to his feet.

"Yes, sir; but, be calm, please, for hit his wearing hupon the nerves to get hex-cited."

"Hit takes hoff ten months from ha life to git hinto ha temper, sir."

"Who is my visitor?"

"Your brother, sir."

"Of course. Who else could it be? Show him in at once, if he has come to take me away from this hell on earth."

Mr. Breton smiled; he rather enjoyed living in that "hell on earth," as the victim termed his very pleasant quarters.

Mr. Breton retired, locked the door after him, and soon after reopened it and ushered in "Doctor Dudley Norman."

The door closed behind the visitor, and the victim stepped quickly forward.

"God bless you, Randolph, for coming to me, and after me as I know you have, for these accursed people here are trying to convince me that I am insane."

"My dear Randolph, I came to see you—"

"Randolph! Randolph! Why do you call me Randolph, when you know I am Dudley?"

The visitor shook his head sadly, and said:

"Ah, Randolph, I fear you are no better than when you came here. I remained away, hoping for your cure—"

"My cure? Great God! Look at me. I never was better in my life."

"Bodily, yes; but, mentally, you have been a great sufferer, my dear Randolph."

"There it is again—Randolph! You know that I am Dudley, and that you are Randolph. Why vex me in this way?"

Again the visitor shook his head.

"Well, we will not quarrel, brother mine. I came to see you, and know just how you are."

"My God! I must be mad, indeed, if you insist upon it that I am Randolph and not Dudley Norman."

"Did I not study medicine and then go West to settle and practice?"

"Did I not go to the mines, and have I not letters from you, signed Randolph, and addressed to me? What mockery is all this? What does it mean?"

"Show me those letters, brother."

Dudley sprang to his desk, took out several packages of letters and threw them on the table.

Then he opened one, and said, excitedly:

"See there, at the date from our old home in Maryland! This letter asks me for money, and I sent a draft for five hundred, and the signature, you see, is—God in Heaven! It is Dudley!"

He dropped the letter and fell back in his chair, white as a corpse.

His brother took up the letter and glanced over it.

"This letter is, as you say, written from our old home in Maryland, but sends you a draft for five hundred, and is signed by me, Dudley Norman, while you see it is addressed to you, and here is the postmark on the envelope."

Randolph Norman was not a man to do things by halves. Every letter of his brother's, every paper, and all bearing the name of Dudley Norman, had been taken by him and duplicated, with a change of names.

The postmark had been forged, even, and then the trunk, containing all, and which had gone astray on reaching Buffalo, had been returned to the victim, as though just found.

Dr. Antisane and Breton had seen all this, and had no doubt of the insanity of

the patient when he claimed to be Dr. Dudley Norman.

The doctor and the nurse made it a rule, a business, in fact, to know all about a patient, get the knowledge as they might.

White and quivering, the victim lay back in his chair, while his lips parted with the words:

"God of Heaven, pity me! I am mad!"

It was too painful, even for the iron nerves of Randolph Norman to remain long with the man whose life he had wrecked, and against whom he was plotting still more deeply, so he soon took his departure, and finding that he could catch a night train out of the town, he departed, having asked Frederick Breton quietly, to get a few days' leave and run down to see him at Glen Idle, but to say nothing about his destination to any one.

Then "Doctor Dudley" Norman visited Walter Vernon, at his asylum, and remained a couple of days, telling him of the death of the governess and that Violet was visiting Mrs. Carrol in Virginia.

And did not the conscience of the plotter smite him when, in bidding farewell to Mr. Vernon he heard the words:

"You are a noble man, Dudley Norman, and God bless you!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. BRETON'S BARGAIN WITH SATAN.

Mr. Frederick Breton was a man of his word. He had promised Randolph Norman that he would visit him at Glen Idle, and so he decided that he needed a week's leave of absence.

Dr. Antisane had found Mr. Breton a very valuable man. He knew a good nurse when he saw one, and the victim's attendant was just the man for the place.

Over a little gin and water they had talked together many an evening, and thus had become quite chummy.

The nurse told Dr. Antisane that he needed a week's recreation, and would run off, with his permission, of course, to see a brother who lived in New York.

The complaisant doctor consented, so another attendant was put in the place of Breton to look after Doctor Norman, who had become very moody and sad since the visit of his brother.

Mr. Frederick Breton felt that there was something more than the ordinary in this visit to the wealthy gentleman of Glen Idle.

He got his expenses and a hundred dollars a month, not to speak of an occasional fee, and as he was a man who believed in saving his money, he had laid up quite a handsome sum for a "rainy day."

It was in the afternoon when he arrived at Glen Idle, and he was fairly stunned at the beauty and magnificence of the place.

"So like Hold Hengland! Why, hit's ha place equal to ha lord's hestate, hit his."

Mr. Breton was a Cockney, pure and simple, but looked like a gentleman from a country town.

The butler at Glen Idle was a Frenchman, so did not note the peculiarity in Mr. Breton's conversation.

"His this Glen Idle?" he asked.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Hand his the master hat 'ome?"

"Yes, monsieur; your card, please, zair, and vill you valk into ze antechamber?"

Now, Mr. Breton had no card; that was a luxury he could well do without, so he had never indulged in the extravagance, having no one to call upon.

"Say that Mr. Frederick Breton, of Hengland, 'as called hon 'im."

Mr. Breton gazed around him admiringly until the butler returned and ushered him into the library.

There sat the master of Glen Idle, and he arose and greeted his visitor cordially.

"Ah, Breton, so you have arrived.

Glad to see you, and hope you left my brother improving?"

"I 'ave harrived, sir, hand ham glad that you hare glad to see me, Dr. Norman; but, Hi left your brother not has 'appy has 'e might be."

"I am sorry. But be seated, for I want to have a talk with you."

Mr. Breton sat down, and at the call of the master a servant brought a silver salver with wines and liquors, and was told that the gentleman would remain until the next day.

Mr. Breton felt flattered, and was correspondingly condescending to the man who showed him to his room.

At dinner he behaved better than his host had expected.

The truth was, Mr. Breton had answered to the name of "Fred" as waiter in a millionaire's family in Melbourne, and he had learned, from observation, how a gentleman should conduct himself at table.

So the dinner passed off well, and Mr. Breton scored a point.

He was in ecstasies over the splendid service and the wines, saw everything that was elegant about the grand establishment, and said to himself:

"What he wants hof me 'e must pay well for."

That evening, when the two sat alone in the library, Norman began to hint at the reason he had for desiring a visit from Mr. Breton.

"Breton," he said, after having discussed his brother's case for some little time, "it pains me deeply to see my poor brother in the condition he is, and were I in his place I would wish to die."

"So would Hi, sir."

"Congress should pass a law making it just for a physician to put out of their misery hopelessly insane people, and all terribly deformed children, at their birth, as well as idiots and those with incurable diseases, where it is only torture for them to live."

"Right you hare, sir! The Hamerican Parliment should do this."

"It would be a great mercy to sufferers, and I feel that it would be just, and so physicians should be allowed the right to take life under the circumstances."

"Yes, sir."

"I would not scruple in such cases, and I would feel that I was merciful to a sufferer."

"Has Hi would, sir."

"I am glad to hear you say this, for I feel so sorry for my poor brother that could I find one who would be thus merciful to him, and, by degrees, end his misery, I would willingly pay him five thousand dollars to see him out of all his sufferings, which give me such incessant distress of mind."

"Oh, Lord!" ejaculated Mr. Breton. "Five thousand dollars?"

"Yes, I would give that sum."

"Of course I would not wish him to die suddenly, nor to be given any violent medicine to cause him pain; but a man like you, say, should know the use of medicines well enough to give doses that would gradually break down strength and in the end cause death as peaceful as though going to sleep."

"Were you willing to do this I would pay one thousand now, say, and one thousand each month for four months, by which time he would be free from his sufferings, and I relieved of all this distress of mind."

"What do you say, Breton, to thus saving him from a prolonged life of wretchedness and sorrow?"

"I think it would be merciful, sir, and I'd undertake it."

By this Mr. Frederick Breton committed himself, and after half an hour's longer conversation, he retired to his luxuriously furnished room for the night.

And more, he had a soother for any compunctions of conscience he might have for the pledge he was under, in a roll of crisp bank notes that he took to bed with him for fear that he might awaken in the morning to find his good fortune but a dream!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A YOUNG HERO.

Rose Hill, the home of the Widow Carrol, was an attractive place.

It was located upon a rise in a valley, with the brook in front, the meadows and fields on either side, and the forest and hills in the rear.

Across the valley a mile were the mountains, and so a grand view was obtainable from the little porch.

The house had been improved, the out-buildings and fences put in good trim, so that, altogether, with its wealth of flowers around it, its location and cozy comforts, Rose Hill was a charming residence.

Two miles and a half distant up the valley, the spire of the village church was visible, and down the valley half a mile was a settlement and a school-house, and there it was that Kathleen had been the teacher.

On the hillside, as one neared the village, was an old church, built before Revolutionary days, it was said, and about it were a number of ancient tombstones.

And here was the burying ground of the Carrols for several generations.

Mrs. Carrol had felt embittered by the gossip of some of her neighbors, when Kathleen had gone away with Randolph Norman, and was anxious to show them that she was not the poor widow they had assumed her to be.

The order she held for a monument to her husband and children, she was determined to have erected at once, and so, on their way from Virginia, she and Violet had stopped off at Baltimore to see the marble cutter regarding it.

Together the widow and young girl selected a shaft, and a very handsome one it was, and the names of the dead were given, a name to each side, the fourth being reserved for herself, Mrs. Carrol said with a sad smile.

The monument and its massive base and iron fence were to be shipped soon, with men to put them up; then the widow and her beautiful young guest went on their way to Rose Hill.

The barouche and horses had arrived, and had been placed in the charge of old Denver, the husband of Phillis, and Violet expressed herself delighted with everything in and about the place.

On her pony, when Mrs. Carrol was busy with household duties in the morning, Violet was wont to ride about the country, going miles away from the farm and always alone, for she had no fear.

Her horse was a spirited, small wiry animal, but he knew his fair rider perfectly, and though a trifle vicious toward others, followed her like a dog, and if she dismounted to gather wild flowers, he would never leave her, but keep near by, hovering in the woods, or along the road side, as the case might be.

The neighbors had ventured in to see the widow upon her return, many of them from idle curiosity to learn the facts of Kathleen's drowning, and to gratify their morbid tastes for gossip, and a few from interest and sympathy, for they remembered how Mrs. Carrol had lost husband, son and daughter, and was alone in the world.

Then Violet's coming created a great sensation. Who was the beautiful child, and what was she to Mrs. Carrol.

As the widow had not taken the neighbors into her confidence about her and her children's affairs, they knew nothing of Violet Vernon.

They beheld a wonderfully beautiful girl in her fourteenth year, dressed with taste, yet very richly, and the owner of a thoroughbred horse, a costly riding habit, gold-headed whip and watch and chain, for these were quickly inventoried by the curious neighbors.

The new barouche and a fine horse, with stylish harness, was also noted, along with the fact that Miss Violet Vernon had brought several trunks with her.

The "improvements" in the grave-

yard were also observed, and it was seen that arrangements were being made for the erection of a monument above the ordinary.

What all this meant the neighbors were curious to know; but the widow was sad-faced and silent, and Denver and Phillis knew nothing when questioned.

As for Violet, there was something about her, girl though she was, that forbade idle questioning, even from the most hardened old gossip-fiend of the community.

One day while out riding she saw a dove coming swiftly toward her, then came the sharp report of a gun from the hillside and the bird dropped into her lap.

She was startled for a moment, but reining in "Doctor," which she had named after her guardian, she caught the dove, which she saw was only wounded, and just then the sportsman came in sight. He was mounted upon a shaggy pony, and had fired from his saddle.

He was a youth of seventeen, well-formed and with a bold, handsome face, with dark eyes full of expression and waving hair falling upon his shoulders.

He wore a homespun suit, with homemade leggings of red leather, and his jacket was of sporting cut, while his cap sat jauntily upon the side of his head.

"I beg pardon, miss, if I alarmed you, but did not see you until after I fired," he said as he halted and raised his cap.

"You startled Doctor more than you did me; but see, this poor dove is wounded, and it fell in my lap."

"It was reckless in me to fire across the road, and I am taught a lesson, for I might have harmed you, miss. But, the dove belongs to you. Maybe I can set his wing and he will live."

He took the dove from her hand as he spoke, while she said: "Oh, if it only would live, and I could have it!"

"Yes, its wing is broken, and I can soon have it well for you. Where shall I bring it, please?"

"To Rose Hill, Mrs. Carrol's farm, if you know where that is?"

"Oh, yes; for I used to go to school to poor, dear Miss Kathleen. I thought you were the beautiful girl they said Mrs. Carrol had brought home with her."

Violet's face, saddened at reference to Kathleen, flushed at the frank compliment which she saw had been uttered without thought, and asked quickly to hide her blushes:

"So you knew Miss Carroll?"

"Ah, yes, miss, and I loved her dearly, and often brought her home in wet weather behind me on my pony."

"You are Duke Sanford, then?" and Violet eyed the youth with interest.

"Yes, miss; but, how did you know that?"

"Miss Carroll often told me of you, and how she had ridden home behind you on your pony; one day, she said a tramp came to the schoolhouse, the day she had received her quarter's salary; all the children had gone. The ruffian robbed her of her money and her watch and chain, but you had seen the man hanging about; you returned, and, having brought your shot gun to school with you, told him to surrender. But he attacked you with his knife and you killed him. It must be awful to kill any one."

"It certainly is, miss, and I never go by the tramps' grave if I can help doing so. But, I must not detain you, and I'll bring the dove when it gets well," and Duke Sanford raised his cap again and rode back into the woods, while Violet returned to Rose Hill, quite impressed by her adventure.

When she arrived at Rose Hill, Mrs. Carrol was in tears, and handed her a dispatch sent over to her from the town, some dozen miles away, for there was no office at the village.

The dispatch read:

"The body has been found. Have sent

it to the town by Express. Have wagon there to meet it. Have written fully.

"Dudley Norman."

CHAPTER XXX.

CAST UP BY THE SEA.

When Mr. Frederick Breton left Glen Idle, it was with a full understanding that he was to be guilty of an "act of mercy."

Under the circumstances he argued with Doctor Dudley Norman that it was far better for a human sufferer, who could never hope for health and happiness, to find rest in the grave and joy in Heaven, than to linger on earth in misery.

Then Mr. Breton had been assured of another position, after his patient died, to look after another invalid who was a great sufferer and would be far better off to be at rest in the tomb.

And should his second patient also go the way of all flesh, in spite of his nurse's devoted services, then Mr. Breton might try his hand as confidential valet to the master of Glen Idle.

Mr. Breton had seemed pleased at the prospect; but, at heart, he refused the honor of some time being valet, though his lips accepted the service.

With Mr. Breton's departure, Doctor Norman's spirits rose. He saw matters shaping themselves to his advantage, and he was content.

For a long while he had not appeared so serene, and almost cheerful, the butler thought.

But, one day another visitor dropped in to call on the master.

The master had no visitors from the neighboring gentry, but somehow he had been called upon considerably of late by outsiders. There were the Sea Gypsies' Queen, then Soto, next Mr. Roger Bonnell, and he was followed by Mr. Breton, who, in turn, was followed by the visitor who had found the doctor not in.

"Haint he in, Mate?" asked this last caller, in not very elegant language.

"No, he vas out," replied the butler, Pierre.

"When will he come back?"

"Soon; he's vas gone fer a drive."

"All right. When he comes, tell him Skipper Lute Bowles, of the Sloop Rockaway, has been here, and that my craft lies off there at anchor, so to come down and hail and I'll come ashore in a boat for him."

Captain Lute Bowles was a sailor, and he looked it. He hailed from Jersey, and his trading voyages were from Barnegat Bay, New York and Philadelphia, and his cargoes were anything that he could get.

His message was repeated to Doctor Norman upon his return, and the gentleman did not appear pleased.

He asked the butler many questions about his visitor, and then, afraid to neglect the request, strolled on down toward the shore.

There lay the Rockaway, true to her name, rocking upon the tiny waves of the river, which a fair breeze was sending ashore, and breaking in a miniature surf.

The sloop was a stiff craft, a good sailer, but by no means yacht-like in design or beauty.

Upon her deck was seen the skipper and a youth of eighteen. The former sprang into a boat when he saw the master of Glen Idle and rowed ashore.

The guilty conscience of Norman made him both curious and anxious.

There would be no perfect rest for him, he thought, until his brother, Mr. Vernon and Mr. Breton were six feet under ground.

With Bennett Carrol and Kathleen dead, and three yet to die, it would require just five graves in the world to insure the perfect happiness of "Lord Lucifer," as the neighbors had begun to call the master of Glen Idle.

Norman eyed the sailor suspiciously as he ran his boat ashore, and asked:

"Are you the man who called at my mansion to see me?"

"I are, Captain Lute Bowles, of the sloop Rockaway, of Barnegat, at your service, sir," and the sailor, having once served in the navy, made a salute.

"Well, Captain Lute Bowles, of the sloop Rockaway, what is your business with me?" and there was something of a sneer in the query.

"You be Doctor Norman of Glen Idle home?"

"Yes."

"I has that for you, then, that you wants."

"What is it?"

"A corpse."

Norman started in spite of himself and turned pale.

"A corpse?" he huskily asked.

"Yes, and one you must prize high, as you offers for it more than any farm and the Rockaway together is worth."

"What is it?"

"I has got her."

"Got who?"

"The dead lady."

Norman choked back his emotion.

He knew that the sailor had found a body. Was it Kathleen's? If so, the Sea Gypsies had deceived him!

He mastered himself with an effort and said:

"My good man, tell me just what you have?"

"A lady got drowned from here didn't she, a week ago?"

"Yes."

"You advertised for her, didn't yer?"

"I did."

"Five thousand for the floater."

"The what?"

"We calls 'em floaters arter they 'rises from the bottom."

"Well?"

"I has found ther floater."

"Where?"

"On the Jersey coast nigh Barnegat."

"When did you find the body?"

"Yesterday morning, when we was coming out, me and my son Matt, that's him on ther sloop and he are my mate, crew and all."

"Yes?"

"Waal, we seen ther body on ther sand on the beach, put in arter it with the skiff, and I says, says I:

"Matt, this are ther floater as is advertised for in ther New York papers, and my wife read it to me. So we puts ther deader—"

"What?"

"The deader, or floater, for we calls 'em both names, inter ther fore hold o' ther sloop and sailed up here ter find you and fetch it back, and tho' we'd a done it without ther reward, still, as it were offered, I guesses yer'll pay it, for yer look rich as Croesus, wife has read ter me about in the book."

Norman was in a quandary. He had paid the Gypsy for the finding of the body, and now here was another demand upon him.

Had the Gypsy really found the body of Kathleen?

Yes, it must have been so, as he had asked him to come and see it; and Soto had known Kathleen by sight.

Then this man must have another body, that of some unknown woman he had found floating about.

"My man, the body of the lady I offered a reward for had certain distinguishing marks about her clothes and—"

"It's not easy, sir, to recognize a body as has been in the water so long; but I remember the description, and the dress, hair and ring answers exactly, and here are ther ring I tuk off ther weddin' finger, and ther body hed a rope about it, with loops as if weights hed been hung on and had slipped out, so as to simply show she hed been drowned on purpose."

"My God!" muttered Norman. His thought was that the Sea Gypsies had sunk the body, but it had been bung-

lingly done, and it had risen and washed ashore.

"I guesses the murderers forgot the ring," continued the man as he felt in his pocket and drew forth a ring, a wide marriage gold band, which he knew but too well.

Had he been in doubt the engraving within would have dispelled it:

"R. N. to Kathleen"

was what was engraved in the ring, and it was the one he had placed upon her finger when the, as he had believed, mock marriage was performed. She had worn it ever since.

Then it occurred to him what no one had thought of before: that she had her watch and chain and earrings on when drowned. These the Gypsy had not returned. So he said:

"But the body had on a watch and chain and earrings?"

"They were gone, sir; guess the murderers got them, and forgot the ring," was the reply of Skipper Bowles.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HUSH MONEY.

Randolph Norman was deeply moved as he stood there on the shore, holding the ring in his hand—the little circlet of gold with which he sought to betray Kathleen Carrol, the woman who had saved his life.

It seemed to him, as he stood there, that he could never down the past—that grim spectres of his evil deeds would continually rise before him.

He had believed Kathleen, really lost in the squall, and suddenly the Queen of the Sea Gypsies appeared before him, claiming that he had done the work he had paid her to do.

He had thought Kathleen's body at rest beneath the sea, and up comes Soto, the Gypsy, to claim the reward for it.

Then the body must again appear, wearing her marriage ring, and with evidence upon it that she had been loaded down with weights, as though to prove that she had been murdered—not lost.

What a sensation this for the newspapers! And how could it all be explained away?

There was but one course to pursue, and that was to draw again upon his gold reserve and pay the reward.

If he did this he would make a friend of Captain Lute Bowles, and he would help him out. So he said:

"My dear sir, this is a very sad matter to me and to others. The mother of this poor lady's body, whom this ring shows that you have found, is very ill, and if the body was now taken to her it would cause her death, so I wish you to help me in the matter, to keep it out of the newspapers. I will pay you your reward at once, and all other expenses you may have to incur, but I wish you and your son to say nothing of the affair. Can I rely upon you both?"

"You kin, for you shows yer is squar by payin' ther reward, and Matt and me can keep our mouths as shet as oysters when thar is need ter be, and we'll say nothin' to ther old lady about it, bein' as wimmen folk is cur'ris about ther tongues; they will talk onless it are about themselves."

"Well, you remain at anchor where you are, and after dark come ashore here for me, for I will have to go and get you the money."

"Then drop down the river to the foot of Forty-second Street, and I'll join you there during the night, and have a coffin taken on board for the body, and will then send it away by train to Virginia, where the lady lived."

"For your extra time, I will give you a hundred dollars, but, for the sake of the poor dead lady's mother, I wish no public affair of it, which a coroner's jury would occasion."

"I'll be mum, sir, and so will Matt, and I thank you," replied the skipper, who did not guess at the depths of wick-

edness in the heart of the man he believed so noble and generous.

Back to his splendid home walked "Lord Lucifer," to sit down alone to his sumptuous dinner, while the shadow of death was not a quarter of a mile away, and the little sloop held a secret the world would have given much to know.

While enjoying his cigar in his library, the twilight crept over land and water, and Pierre came in to light the lamps.

Soon after he arose, opened his safe, counted out from his diminishing funds the money for the skipper.

Had he dared, he would have attempted to bribe the skipper to cast the body back into the sea.

But, he thought he saw in the weather-beaten face an honesty that warned him not to make the effort.

No, the body must be sent home to Virginia, he knew, and then all that could be said, if known, would be that he had to avoid publicity, not reported to the coroner its being found.

So down to the shore he went. The skipper was there and rowed him out to the boat.

In the forward hold was the body, the hatch off, and, by the aid of a lantern, he saw the body laid out on a board, the long hair and the face covered with a towel.

"It hain't fit to be seen, sir," said the skipper.

"For God's sake don't uncover it!" he cried, in a tone of horror, and added calmly:

"I recognize the hair, her dress; yet the ring alone is conclusive proof."

He shrunk back, and entering the cabin, counted out the amount of the reward. Which done he gave the skipper further directions, and returning ashore, went back to the mansion, and, half an hour after, drove to the station to catch the train to the city.

With gold a man can do much, and by paying liberally, and telling his own story to an undertaker about the sorrowing mother, Randolph Norman got a metallic case sent on board the sloop; and with it packed securely, the Rockaway landed on the Jersey side.

The body was there borne to the express office and forwarded to the old home in Virginia.

A telegram was then sent to Mrs. Carrol, a letter written at the Hotel in Jersey City, and dispatched, and the work of Randolph Norman was done, as far as his dead wife Kathleen was concerned; at least he so believed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TRAMP'S GRAVE.

It was a sad satisfaction to Mrs. Carrol, and also to Violet, to feel that Kathleen was to at last find a resting place on earth, and not to be at the bottom of the sea.

"I will feel better, so much better now!" said the mother.

"Yes, auntie, and so will I, for I will dearly love to go with flowers to her grave."

"How noble that man is. You have a guardian, Violet, to love and be proud of," said Mrs. Carrol, and she added to herself:

"And to think how poor Kathleen and I misjudged him, and made him suffer for his wicked brother's sins. But then, if he is insane, I should not judge him rashly, for he did not know what he was doing."

That afternoon Violet took a walk and alone. She wandered down through the meadows by a path she had never gone before.

It brought her out half a mile from Rose Hill, in a little vale, and on the bank grew a large tree.

She stopped with an air of reverence, as she beheld beneath it a grave. It was grass-grown, and at its head was a white wood cross.

Approaching it, Violet saw, most skillfully cut into the arm of the cross, and in neat Roman letters, the words:

"UNFORTUNATE AND UNKNOWN.

Killed Oct. 15th, 18—."

This was all, but it told a pathetic story.

Some one, unfortunate and unknown, lay there beneath the sod, and some one with a kind heart had erected the little cross above the grave, and cut the simple inscription into the wood.

Upon the cross hung a battered tin-cup, a long-bladed clasp knife, and a small ivory crucifix hung upon a brass neck-chain. These were all, and they told of the belongings of the dead.

For some time they had evidently hung there, and yet no one had removed them, no impious hand had dared disturb them from above the dead.

There was no farm house nearer than a quarter of a mile, Violet thought, and so with a sigh for the "unfortunate and unknown," in the lonely grave, she walked on toward the highway, which she knew ran not far distant.

As she reached it, she saw a little white school house not far away, and beyond a small settlement.

"It is poor Miss Carrol's school house," she said, as she recognized it, for Mrs. Carrol had shown it to her in their drives.

Then she took the road back to Rose Hill, and as she did so met an urchin trudging along toward the little settlement.

"Whose grave is that up the vale, little boy?" she asked, seeking information from the freckle-faced lad.

"Lor' yer musn't go there, 'cause its hanted."

"The grave?"

"Yes, it's the place where they buried him."

"Him? What him?"

"Why, don't you know? the tramp as big Duke Sanford kilt, when he robbed Miss Ca'rl, our teacher. He's a brave boy, Duke is, and hain't afraid o' hants or nothin'."

"And that is the tramp's grave?" said Violet, thoughtfully, speaking to herself rather than to the boy.

"Yes it is."

"They did not know who he was?"

"No, indeedy, fer he hadn't nothin' to tell, and Duke shot him stone dead."

"And wno had him buried?" the girl asked.

"Duke did."

"And did he put that cross there?"

"He did, did Duke, and he cut the writin' on it, too, and hung up ther tramp's fixin's on it, and said he'd lick any gerloot as tuk 'em off; but Lor'! nobody wants ter go thar, cause hants is seen thar at night, and tramps' graves is allus hanted, folks says."

Violet smiled, and feeling in her pocket found a half dollar, which she gave to the boy, thereby almost paralyzing him, for, as far as she could see him, he was standing where she had left him, gazing after her as though he thought she might be a "hant."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT REST.

When Violet Vernon returned from her walk, which had led her by accident to the Tramp's Grave, she found that old Denver had returned from the village with the mail.

Mrs. Carrol was reading a letter from the marble cutters in Baltimore, telling her to expect their men in a couple of days to put up the monument.

As a grave now had to be dug for poor Kathleen's remains, Mrs. Carrol drove over to the village the next day to see the sexton and also to mark the spot for the base of the monument over the bodies of her dead.

Other of her kindred were buried there, but the new monument would not interfere with the other tombstones.

Mrs. Carrol also called upon the worthy old clergyman, a man whose hair had whitened in the service of the members of his little church, and asked him to perform the last rites over her daughter.

"From the church you will bury her, my dear madam?" he asked.

"No, we will go to the town, Violet and I, and accompany the body to the burying ground. There meet us, please, for I care not for a crowd. No, no; let us bury our loved one without show."

Driving to the Post Office, the afternoon mail had just arrived, and a letter came from Randolph Norman.

It was not opened until they reached home. Then Mrs. Carrol read aloud what had been written from the hotel in Jersey City:

"My Dear Mrs. Carrol:

"My telegram informed you of the finding of the body of your loved daughter. I have just sent by Express, seeing it placed on the train, the metallic casket containing the remains.

"I was called upon yesterday at Glen Idle, by the skipper of a coasting craft, who informed me that he had on board the body of a young lady found upon the beach at Barnegat.

"I viewed the body in the hold of his vessel, and recognized the dress which I had often seen her wear, and took from her finger her wedding ring, which I will send to you, and this is proof positive that there is no mistake as to the identity of the remains.

"I also cut for you a lock of her hair, as further proof, and because I believe you will be glad to have such memento of your loved one, and I know that the casket cannot possibly be opened after being closed.

"Bettie, the upstairs girl, whom you remember, tells me that your daughter had on her watch and chain, and earrings the day she lost her life; but if so, they were lost, or perhaps taken, though I believe the skipper who found the body to be an honest man.

"Of course I paid to him the amount of the reward I offered, and I assure you, my esteemed friend, it was a pleasure for me to do so, and I trust you will so consider it, while, as I am rich in this world's goods, I trust you will command me in any way in which I can serve you.

"I only wish I felt able to come to you for the burial, but I cannot do so, yet hope to visit Rose Hill before very long, when I come to bring back with me my sweet maid Violet.

"I have a notion, when Violet is a year older, of placing her at boarding school, where she can receive every advantage, and then closing Glen Idle, I will go to Europe for a few years, until she is ready to make her debut as an heiress, and belle, which latter I am sure she will be.

"My best love to her, please, and say that I will write to her soon.

"With a heart full of sympathy for you in your sorrow, believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Dudley Norman."

Such was the letter, and its kind words brought tears of gratitude to the eyes of the poor widow, while Violet said:

"Gardy is a good man; but sometimes I wish he was a little different from what he is."

The next day Denver drove Mrs. Carrol and Violet to the town to meet the body of Kathleen, old Phillis accompanying them.

The hearse was there to meet the train, and with its single carriage following, took up its slow drive of a dozen miles to the village burying-ground.

The white-haired clergyman sat alone upon his little piazza and saw the hearse coming far down the road.

He arose, went to the church, put on his robes, and met them at the gate,

along with the sexton and his men.

As the little cortege moved from the hearse to the grave, the four workmen bearing the casket, the clergyman, the mother, and Violet, followed by old Denver and Phillis, a person glided out from the shadow of the church and approached with uncovered head, while in his arms he bore a huge bunch of wild flowers.

When the last words were said, and the mound had been made into a grave, this person stepped forward, and bending over, placed the wild flowers upon the grave.

"God bless you, Duke Sanford, for this act. You loved her, too," cried the widow, and her tears flowed afresh, while silently the youth stole away.

And soon after the others followed, leaving the dead at rest.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DUKE SANFORD.

There was surprise in the community in which Mrs. Carrol dwelt, and more gossip.

The people could not at first understand the quiet funeral: but hints soon went out, perhaps from a word dropped from the honest parson, that, as poor Kathleen had been basely slandered in the past, the mother saw no need of asking the slanderers to come and mourn for her.

"No pall-bearers, only the widow, that young girl visiting her, and Duke Sanford—why, the workmen at the burying ground took the casket from the hearse to the grave!" was what the oracle at the village tavern said, as the affair was talked over.

The inmates of Rose Hill Farm had certainly given the people in its vicinity food for talk the past two years, for from the coming to the village tavern of Randolph Norman to the putting up of the grand monument in the Carrol plot, there had been something for them to gossip about.

Then, soon after the funeral of Kathleen, came this grand monument, upon a huge log-bearing wagon, and the handsome fence followed.

The tall, snowy shaft was seen from the village, and from farms up and down the valley for miles.

And more, over the brow of the hill it was visible from the piazza and sitting-room windows of Rose Hill Cottage.

The men did their work well; the iron fence was put in place and painted, and the villagers were proud of the addition to their little cemetery.

One afternoon Violet went there alone, and walked, carrying with her a large bunch of flowers, to place in the urn at the base of the tomb.

There she found a bunch of wild flowers, fresh and evidently placed there but a short while before.

She knew who it was had put them there, for Mrs. Carrol had told her how the wild flowers laid on the grave the day of the funeral by Duke Sanford had been her daughter's favorites, as her old pupil had known, for often had he carried bouquets to school for her.

"And who is he, auntie?" asked Violet.

"His mother lives on a farm down the valley, some two miles from here. She comes from some of the oldest blood in Virginia. They are well to do. Duke is to go into the army, I hear, for he is striving to get a cadetship at West Point.

"He is a splendid boy, and I wish him well, for my child thought so much of him, and he really seemed to love her."

It was getting along toward twilight when Violet hastened home, and she was beginning to get a little anxious, for she had not intended to stay so late, so she was glad to see a horseman coming along behind her at a gallop.

She recognized Duke in an instant, and drawing rein, the boy sprung from his pony, and leaving him to follow, joined her.

Doffing his cap with one hand, she saw

that he held something in the other, and he said:

"I came after you, miss, to bring you the dove, for its wing I set, and it's about well now, and it's yours, you know."

"Oh, how kind of you, and to think you were in earnest about giving it to me!"

"Oh, yes, for it went right into your lap when wounded, you know; but it's getting quite tame."

"So it seems; but will you take it out of the cage for me?"

"The cage is yours, too, miss, for I made it for you, if you will accept it with the dove?"

"You are so good to me; but, what a beautiful cage, and so well made—how ingenious you are, Mister—Mister—"

"Call me Duke, please, miss."

"I will if you wish it; but we have never been introduced, and yet I seem to know you so well, for Miss Carrol spoke of you to me, as I told you, and Mrs. Carrol, too."

"Did you ask her about me?" he eagerly queried, as though delighted at the idea that she might have done so.

"Oh, yes; but, will you not go on home with me, Mister—Duke, I mean—for it is getting dark, and I really am a little afraid of those dark woods, you know, where—"

She stopped, for she was about to say: "Where the tramp's grave is," for the way she had taken would lead her near it.

"You mean where the tramp's grave is, miss?"

"Yes, Duke; but you must call me Violet."

"I will, miss; but you need not be afraid, for I will go home with you, and be only too glad of the chance," he frankly added.

Then he took the cage, and calling to Buttons, his pony, to follow, he walked on by her side.

"You must be so brave to go by that grave at night, Duke."

"I don't like to, Violet, because I killed the poor man in self-defense; but then I do not believe the dead come back again."

"I often think of it, especially now Miss Kathleen is gone, and pray I may never have to take another life."

Soon after they reached Rose Hill, and Mrs. Carrol was becoming alarmed about Violet; but she welcomed Duke and urged him to stay to tea, which he gladly did.

When he left that night Violet retired to her room in full consciousness that she was in love—her first love!

And Duke Sanford? He, too, was in love with the pretty little heiress of Glen Idle!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WARNING.

"Mount Sanford Manor" was the name of the home of Duke Sanford.

It was an old brick mansion, with large rooms and many of them. It had been built by the great grandfather of the youth, in Colonial days, and with an eye to the comfort of its owners.

Over a thousand acres were in the estate around the mansion, fields, meadow land, and forests, and the cultivation of the large farm brought in a very liberal income to Mrs. Sanford, who wished to leave to her only son and heir a handsome fortune.

She was justly proud of this handsome boy of hers, and never had he given her a pang of real sorrow, though at times he was a trifle wild and full of boyish pranks.

He rode like a Comanche, and lad though he was, he constantly won all the prizes at the county fairs, and could outjump, outrun, and swim further and better than any one matched against him.

His father had determined to make an athlete of him, with a view that he should enter the army or navy, for Captain Sanford had been a naval officer of distinction.

His grandfather had been an army officer of the war of 1812, and his father before him had served during the Revolution, and before it, so that he came of "fighting stock."

Though the Widow Sanford lived economically, she was yet generous, for the poor had reason to bless her, and she saved but for her son.

"You shall at least have an income larger than your army pay, Duke," she was wont to say, when talking to him about his future as an army officer.

Mrs. Sanford was also one who had never allowed an unkind word to be said in her presence about Kathleen Carrol.

She had always liked the beautiful girl, and when the tongue of scandal was busy, she was wont to say:

"You do not know what she had to go through with, and how she may have been tempted, so do not misjudge her, but look to your own lives. I can never believe a word against that dear girl."

And Duke, too, had been his teacher's staunch friend, and took great pleasure in reminding those who had talked against her of how willing they were to praise when they found she had married a millionaire, as the gossips had it was really the case.

"Will you be back to supper to-night, Duke? Since you have met that pretty little Miss Violet Vernon, you are a sad runaway from home!" chided Mrs. Sanford one evening, as Duke mounted his best horse and was about to ride away.

"I guess I'll stay to tea at Rose Hill, mother, for Mrs. Carrol always urges me to," and Duke blushed, raised his hat, and rode on.

He had become very particular about his dress of late, always looking his best, and had not ridden Buttons for some time, preferring to mount Vixen, a thoroughbred mare he had won at a fair for being the best rider.

Mrs. Carrol had found her table constantly supplied of late with game, brook trout, and fruits, and it all came from Duke Sanford.

He had never forgotten to take either a bunch of wild flowers, or of roses, from Mount Sanford Manor twice a week to the burying ground, and in many ways he had completely won the widow's heart.

When Duke reached the cottage, Phillis told him that "Ole Miss" had gone to town that morning to attend to some business, and Missy Vi had been writing letters, so did not go, but half an hour before had left for the graveyard, on foot.

"An' I is real skeert about her, too, Mars' Duke, 'cause soon arter she left, a mighty wicked-lookin' man went along de road on foot, and den dere was a karidge come along wid annuder man in it, jist as mean lookin', and he war drivin' slow."

"Missy Vi hoped as she'd see Ole Miss and ride back wid her; but I is anxious about dem men, sah, 'cause I is sartin dey was known to each other and meened no good."

"I'll go at once, Aunt Phillis, and—"

"'Spouse dey was wicked men, Mars' Duke, is you got yer weepins wid you?"

"No, Aunt Phillis, but I guess I won't need any."

"Hold on, chile! Don't you go widout nothin'! I'll git Mars' Bennett's pistul, ther same he fought de dool wid dat got him kilt—Lordy! what is I talkin' about? I declar I do run on dat nonsensikil I doesn't know what I says. I'se gittin' so old I is gittin' childish—wait, Mars' Duke, till I gits de pistul."

Duke was half tempted to dart away without the weapon, but he knew some hard characters had been seen about of late, and he thought it best to be armed.

"It's loaded, sah, 'cause Missy Vi loaded it herself only yesterday, arter we heerd de Spencer house was broke inter and robbed."

"Now go, honey, and I knows if dem two men is wicked intentioned, you kin

perfect Missy Violet, 'cause you is dat brave to do it, and I hain't forgot how you kilt de tramp and saved—Lordy! I done losin' my breb talkin', while he are flyin' away like a bird."

"He do look awful fine on dat wild crittur he ridin', and if Missy Violet was a leetle older may be she fall in luf with him, and I guess dat is just what Ole Miss wanter ter happen."

"If on'y Missy Kathleen cud have had sich a beau as dat, how happy we'd all have been; but it am too late now—too late!" and old Phillis returned to her duties, after another glance down the highway to where a cloud of dust showed where the youth was rapidly dashing along, Vixen at full speed.

And old Phillis' fears were not without cause, for, as Duke Sanford rode swiftly around a bend of the road, a carriage dashed rapidly past him, and in it he saw a dark, evil-faced man on the front seat, who was urging his horses along at a slapping pace.

The curtains of the carryall were down, but Duke beheld some one on the back seat, and there came a stifled cry!

"Save me Duke! for—oh!"

It was Violet's voice, and her words were cut short, ending in a cry.

She had been kidnapped!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

So dearly had she loved her governess, that the thoughts of Violet Vernon were in the little graveyard with the dead many and many a time during each day.

She went whenever she could with flowers to put in the urn, and she most always found that there were others there; some one had been before her, and that someone she knew to be Duke Sanford.

Upon the afternoon when Violet walked alone to the cemetery, she had expected to reach there, place her bunch of roses in the urn, and return to the lower highway in time to be picked up by Mrs. Carrol on her return from town, and thus get a ride home.

If she did not meet Mrs. Carrol she would have to walk back home, unless she might meet Duke, as she rather expected would be the case.

If not, then she had to risk darkness overtaking her while alone on the highway.

So she walked rapidly along the highway until she reached the churchyard.

She found the water in the urn nearly gone, so she took the sexton's bucket from the tool shed and went to the brook to get more.

This consumed some little time, and she was coming back with the water when a man arose from a seat near a grave and said politely:

"I'll carry yer bucket, miss, fer it's too heavy for you."

She was slightly startled, but yielded the bucket to him with a quiet:

"I thank you, sir; it is heavy, and I am carrying it to that large monument yonder."

"It's light fer me," and the two walked on together.

In spite of his politeness the countenance of the man was an evil one. He was dark-faced, bearded, and had small, black, piercing eyes.

He was dressed in a style more like a sailor than a landsman, and walked along at a quick, nervous pace.

That he was a foreigner, a Spaniard he appeared to be, Violet was certain; but he spoke English without the slightest accent.

"There, miss, and I'll clean the urn out for you."

"Don't trouble yourself, sir, for I can do it," said Violet.

"It's no trouble," and with his large hands he soon had the urn clean, and emptied the water into it.

"Now I'll take the bucket back," he said.

"You are very kind; but do you know

where it belongs?"

"Over in the tool arbor, yonder."

"Yes, sir."

"It's your mother, maybe is buried here?"

"No, sir; my governess."

"You must love her heaps to bring flowers here so often, for I see the faded ones about?"

"I did love her devotedly, and I love her memory."

"Does yer live near here, miss?"

"About two miles down the valley."

"It's getting late, so you better let me see you home, miss?"

"O, thank you, sir. I expect to be taken up by auntie's carriage."

"Your auntie?"

"I call her so, sir, but she is no relative, only she is the mother of my governess," and Violet was growing nervous at the persistency of the man.

"Now I must go, sir," she said, as she hastily arranged the flowers. "I'm ever so much obliged for your kindness—Good evening, sir!"

She walked away, while the man said:

"My way leads down the valley, too, miss, so if you don't see your carriage and wants comp'ny I'll be near."

"Thank you" replied Violet, and she hastened away.

She reached the highway and glanced nervously up toward the town.

The carriage was not in sight, and as twilight was near at hand, she walked rapidly away.

She knew that for a mile there was not a single farm house, and felt that it would be after dark before she got home.

She could hardly believe that the man was following her, and yet she was aware that he was behind her and coming on at a quick walk.

Presently she saw a vehicle approaching, and as it drew near it came to a halt.

In another minute the man behind her was by her side and he said:

"Miss, this is my mate, and he was coming after me, for I went in to visit my mother's grave. We goes on down the valley, so we'll drop you at home. Just git right in."

"Oh, no! Thank you, sir! I prefer to walk," and Violet tried not to be afraid of one who had just been to visit his mother's grave.

But if anything, the driver of the carryall was more evil looking than his companion, and she wished to get rid of them, so said again, as they both urged her:

"No, I will walk, so please go on and leave me to do so."

"Can't think of it, for it wouldn't be perlit; you must ride," and, instantly, he seized her around the waist, and, while the driver threw open the door of the carryall, he thrust her inside, and springing after called out:

"Now drive for it, Jim, and I'll keep her quiet."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CHASE.

The horses of the kidnappers had not well started before around the bend dashed Duke Sanford.

He had heard the cry of Violet, recognized her voice, muffled though it was, and essayed to check Vixen at once.

But the mare was iron-mouthed, and then on the full run, wished to have her way, so it was a several hundred yards' dash ere Duke could bring her to a turn, and the vehicle then had all of a quarter of a mile the start.

It was now dark, and the kidnappers were anxious to get as far ahead of their pursuer as possible, so as to dodge him.

"I don't mind him, for he looked like a boy; but he may set men onto us, mate, so don't let ther horses rest."

"I hain't a goin' ter, and ef he follers into the bottom, on ahead, I says put a bullet in him, for we kin reach the river in four hours, and by daylight

have ther craft a long way out o' danger."

"We must; but we must dodge that boy, or he'll get help at every farmhouse he passes."

"Yonder is where ther leetle lady lives, and beyond that is ther settlement; then comes ther bottom, and thar is whar we has got ter check ther boy."

"Yes; but keep ther gal still, or she'll open up a yell as she goes by."

"No danger, if I puts my heavy hand over her mouth, which I will do, miss, if you hollers, for we hain't goin' ter lose yer now we has got yer."

Violet said nothing. She knew that she had been entrapped for a purpose, and had heard the threats against Duke Sanford.

They might say he was "only a boy," but he would rescue her she knew, unless they killed him. She could do nothing but bide the time and see.

The horses sped swiftly by Rose Hill, startling old Phillis, who supposed they were running away.

It was dark, but there was a young moon, and the road was plainly visible, while the driver drove skillfully.

Through the little settlement they went, and on past the school house, the vale in which was the tramp's grave.

Twenty miles away was the river, and and down the hill to the valley bottom. along this road Violet had heard there was not a single farm, for it was all lowlands.

And Duke Sanford?

When once he had checked his headstrong mare and turned, he went with a vengeance to the rescue.

By this time a third of a mile ahead ran the vehicle.

Like a bird Vixen flew on, and Phillis, startled by the rapidly passing carryall, was fairly frightened as she saw the shadowy form of a horse and rider and heard the words sharp and ringing:

"Ho, Phillis! Spread the alarm! That carriage holds Violet. She has been kidnapped and—"

Phillis heard no more, for the horse and rider were gone.

Her yells brought another servant, one of the farm hands, and she hastily told him what Duke Sanford had said, and added:

"Jump on de plough horse and ride to de village, and spread de alarm, Joe, for Denver he's away wid ole miss in town."

"Lordy! dat young Mars' Duke done got de mad up in him now, sure, an' somebody is gwine ter git hurted!"

"I so glad I give him de pistul! It is dem men I seen go as has kidnapped dat bressed chile. Lor' be praised! here are ole miss now!"

Just then the barouche drove rapidly up to the gate, and Phillis quickly told what had happened, as far as she knew.

Mrs. Carrol was almost dazed with alarm and amazement for a minute, but then she said:

"You have done just right, Phillis. I will drive on to the village and spread the alarm."

"Thank God, that noble boy is after them!"

She sprang back into the barouche and Denver drove rapidly to the little settlement.

The farm hand was there, and an excited crowd were gathering, while half a dozen men had run for their horses.

They had seen the vehicle dash by, and soon after it Duke Sanford had fairly flown by, while he had shouted:

"To the rescue, men! A young girl has been kidnapped and is in the vehicle ahead! Follow me!"

As Mrs. Carrol arrived several horsemen, armed with shot-guns, rifles, or pistols, came dashing down the one street of the settlement, and a voice called out:

"Which road did they take?"

"The bottom road to the river," shouted a man running up, and who had heard the rumble of the flying vehicle. He had

seen Duke, who called to him that they had gone that way.

With a cheer the horsemen rode away, but the fugitives had the start of them by over a mile.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

The road through the bottoms was as level as a tenpin alley, and without a rut to mark the smooth run.

There was only a turn here and there, and those not short ones, while the young moon lighted the way fairly well.

The kidnappers had arranged against all accidents, and had prepared for a chase if it became necessary.

The man who held the reins devoted himself to his duty, and the one on the back seat sat with his arm and hand ready to grasp his captive or smother her cries.

And Violet, motionless, silent, but watchful, waited calmly for the result of all this.

They swept through the settlement, down the valley road, not a word spoken until they had left the house a mile behind them.

"Are that boy coming?" the driver spoke.

The other looked back through the little glass lookout in the rear curtain.

"Yas, he's coming; and more—he's gained considerable."

"Waal, let him."

This remark sent a chill to the heart of Violet, for she knew well what it meant.

"He are coming pretty peart, mate," said the man on the rear seat, again looking back.

"Waal, then, yer'll have ter do it; but, fix the gal fust."

What being "fixed" meant Violet could not understand; but she was not left long in doubt, for suddenly she felt something cold touch her wrists, and in an instant she was manacled.

"This is infamous!" she cried.

"Can't help it, miss, for we has got ter save you and pectect ourselves. I has ter gag yer, too."

"To prevent my calling out?"

"Yes, miss."

"If you will not do that I pledge you my honor I'll not utter a cry."

"Come, mate, if the gal is ironed she's safe, so look to that boy, for I hears hoof-falls closer."

The man then quickly tied a rope about Violet's waist, and made it fast to the seat; then he grasped a pistol, just as the head of Vixen appeared alongside and Duke Sanford cried out:

"Draw rein, quick, or I'll kill you!"

It was to the driver he spoke, and the latter dealt him a blow with all his force with his whip.

The boy did not flinch, but, with a wild snort of rage and fright, Vixen sprang forward and aside.

This act doubtless saved Duke Sanford's life, as the man on the rear seat fired at him and the bullet cut through his sleeve.

The shot startled the flying carriage horses and gave the driver all he could do to see to them, and Vixen became almost frantic.

But, just here did Duke Sanford show his superb horsemanship, great strength and nerve, for, in an instant, he again ranged alongside of the running team.

"Stop! or I will kill you!"

"Kill him, mate, for he's got me covered!" yelled the driver, aiming another blow with his whip.

His mate fired as the whip struck Vixen, and the animal, with a cry of pain, sprang into the air and stumbling, fell—shot.

But, as she fell, Duke Sanford fired, not at the driver, but at the nigh horse, and with a snort and plunge the animal went down!

With a loud snap the pole broke and the vehicle surged forward upon the fallen horse, whose mate was also

dragged down, and the driver was hurled by the sudden stop over upon the kicking, struggling animals.

He gave a loud yell of fright, and then a groan of pain, while the door opened and his comrade sprang out, revolver in hand.

In spite of his nimbleness, Duke Sanford had fallen heavily, and was considerably shaken up by the fall; but he staggered to his feet, and, pistol in hand, rushed toward the vehicle, crying:

"You must submit now!"

The man inside sprang out, and three shots were fired in quick succession.

Then came the cry:

"Violet! Violet! say you are not hurt!"

"No, indeed, you brave, noble Duke! I am all right, but am tied fast to the seat."

"And the men?" she asked in a low tone, as she opened the door.

"I had to kill the one who just sprang out, and I think the horses have kicked the other to death."

The driver, bruised and bewildered, rose from the wreck as Duke stepped forward.

"Come, my man, surrender quick, or you go to join your comrade!"

"I've got nothin' else ter do, yer young devil," was the sullen, vicious response.

"Very well; hold up your hands, while I get your weapons."

"I has got none."

"Up with them, I say, for I am in a killing humor just now!"

Up went the hands, and the youth quickly disarmed him.

"Oh, Duke! others are coming!" cried Violet.

"Yes, they are friends, Violet."

Five horsemen dashed up, and others were heard coming along rapidly behind them.

"Ho, Duke! you've got 'em! Hurrah!" cried one of the party.

"Yes, one is dead, and here is the other, a prisoner, Captain Lane. Will you see to the dead man, too, sir, while I go back with Miss Violet?"

"Yes, indeed, my brave boy, I will!" said Captain Lane, while one of the others laughingly remarked:

"We'll bury 'em by your tramp, Duke, so you'll have a little graveyard of your own."

Duke went to the carriage, and soon freed Violet of her irons and bonds, and just then up drove Mrs. Carrol in the barouche.

A few words of explanation followed, and Violet told what she had heard the men say about a vessel. Duke at once decided to put his saddle on the other horse from the carryall and ride on with Captain Lane and several others to see about this craft of the kidnappers.

Mrs. Carrol and Violet at once drove back home, while Duke and a few others rode on to the river.

It was afternoon of the next day before they returned; then Duke Sanford learned that the crowd had tried the kidnapper before "Judge Lynch," and had hanged him soon after the departure of the mounted party, after which the two bodies had been buried by "Duke Sanford's Tramp."

"And you could not capture the vessel?" asked Violet, as Duke stopped at Rose Hill.

"No. Those on board seemed to suspect something when they saw us ride up, for they set sail and made off."

"An old man and a youth were on the craft, and I saw the name on the stern, and it was:

"The Rockaway

of

"Barnegat Bay."

"Why, that is the name Gardy wrote me, of the sloop that found poor Miss Kathleen's body, and he said, too, there was only an old man and youth on board. What a coincidence," said Violet.

"There was no other craft near that

we could get, and the wind being fair, they escaped us," Duke explained.

To escape Violet's expressions of gratitude for his rescue of her, he declined to remain to dinner, and went on homeward.

CHAPTER XL.

A PRISONER AGAIN.

This attempted abduction of Violet Vernon created much comment in the neighborhood of Rose Hill, and many persons called to congratulate Mrs. Carrol and the young heiress upon the failure of the plot.

Of course, Duke Sanford came in for a great deal of praise, and he was looked upon as more of a hero than ever.

The dastardly plot had certainly been well avenged, and it was looked upon as done to get ransom money from the guardian of Violet.

At once did Violet sit down and write her guardian a full account of the affair, not forgetting to dwell upon the heroism of Duke Sanford.

Then Violet urged Mrs. Carrol to drive over to Mount Sanford Manor with her, that she might personally tell the mother of her boy hero how full of gratitude her heart was for her escape, and all owing to Duke's most noble conduct.

In answer to her letter to her guardian came a telegram:

"Am coming to Rose Hill. My congratulations upon your escape, and lasting gratitude to your Boy Hero.

"Dudley Norman."

The third day after Doctor Dudley Norman put in an appearance at Rose Hill.

He was given a warm welcome by the Widow Carrol and Violet, whom he surprised by walking over from the village, for he had come by private conveyance from the town, and not by stage, as they had expected he would.

"How did you find your way so readily, Doctor Norman?" asked the widow.

His face flushed slightly, as he answered:

"I met several persons who directed me; but what a lovely home you have here!"

Phyllis shook her head as she scrutinized the visitor attentively at tea that night, saying to herself:

"If dat hain't de man dat ust ter visit Missy Kathleen, den it am his ghost, sartin sure. Folkse may be twins, and look all alike, but somehow I believe dat am de same gemman, only I wouldn't say so to ole miss."

Duke Sanford rode over after tea, and Doctor Norman warmly thanked him for his very great goodness to his ward, while he added:

"I took the liberty, Mr. Sanford, of sending you a saddle horse from Baltimore, in place of the one you lost that night. She is a splendid animal, I can assure you, and I took the liberty of naming her Violet."

"You are most kind, sir, and I shall appreciate your gift, I assure you, because it is from you, as well as on account of her name, and the circumstance it will remind me of," said Duke.

And as Norman told him the mare was by that time at the tavern, he rode over to the village with him, driven by Mrs. Carrol's coachman.

"There is the tomb, sir, of poor Miss Kathleen and her brother, sir," remarked Duke, as they drove by.

"Yes," was all the reply, and they soon after reached the village, where they found that the mare had arrived.

Delighted with his present, Duke placed his saddle, which he had brought along, upon her back, and set off for home.

When he had come to Virginia, Violet had expected her guardian to remain a week at least; but, haunting memories caused him to say they must at once return home.

So farewells were said, and with an invitation for Duke Sanford to visit

Glen Idle when he came on to enter the West Point Military Academy, the guardian and his ward left for the north.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ABDUCTION.

It seemed very lonely, very desolate to Violet Vernon, when once again she found herself at Glen Idle.

In spite of the grand mansion, and all in it and about it that heart could wish, the young heiress found herself roaming about in a dejected kind of way.

She preferred dear old Rose Hill Cottage, and the hills and valleys about it, to Glen Idle Manor and the grand beauty of the Hudson River.

She also found herself wishing for the society once more of Duke Sanford in preference to that of her guardian.

Although but a girl, Violet was mature for her years, and really begun to feel that she was heart and soul in love with her Boy Hero.

Her guardian had expressed himself as charmed with Duke Sanford, and really felt most grateful to him for the service he had rendered, as far as one of his selfish nature could feel gratitude for anything.

But he had feared, young as she was, that Violet had become interested in her Virginia Paladin. This would not do; he had other designs for his ward!

He had decided that he would put her at boarding school, and the Convent of the Sacred Heart presented to his mind the place of all others for her, as he felt assured she would there be kept away from any influence that might arise against him.

He spoke to her upon the subject, and was pleased with her reply:

"I am willing to go anywhere you deem best, Gardy, for I wish to learn all I can and become an accomplished woman, and Miss Randolph said that the convent was a most delightful place for a young girl."

"Then, Vi, we will get you ready to go there. I shall close up Glen Idle and go to Europe for a few years."

"And papa?"

"I shall see him before I go, and, of course, if he improves, he can return at once to Glen Idle, while he will doubtless visit you from time to time at the convent."

"But, Gardy, you will not remain abroad until I graduate?"

"No, indeed! I shall return each year, and shall not go for some little time yet, but am anxious to see you settled comfortably in the convent as soon as possible."

"Yes, but you know Duke comes on soon, Gardy, and I wish to see him, of course."

Randolph smothered his wrath, and placidly responded:

"Ah, yes, and he is to visit us for a few days, I remember; but, it is arranged that, after he leaves, you will go to the convent?"

"Yes, Gardy," and Violet retired to her room.

The next day she got a letter from Duke. It told her he was coming on, a week sooner than he had expected, as he wished to visit a relative in New Jersey, and would call on her before he came to make his promised visit, as he was coming up to the city for a day.

Delighted at the prospect of seeing her boy lover, Violet went off to look up her guardian, who, a servant told her, had walked down toward the river.

She followed the path along the bank until she came to the spot where had been the camp of the Sea Gypsies, when, suddenly, two men sprung out from behind a thicket, and a heavy blanket was thrown over her head, smothering her outcry of alarm.

Then she was seized by strong arms and borne rapidly to a boat tied to the shore a few rods distant, and two minutes later the heiress of Glen Idle was a prisoner in the cabin of a small sloop.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SKIPPER'S RESCUE.

Captain Lute Bowles, of the coasting sloop Rockaway, was what is vulgarly termed in Florida "half horse, half alligator"—that is, he was both farmer and sailor.

He had a little farm not far from Barnegat Bay, and he had a bed of fine oysters in the waters quite convenient to his home, and which gave him a good revenue.

Then his sloop coasted with freight when oystering, fishing, and farming were dull.

His home was an humble one, but he was prudent, saving, industrious, being anxious to have a fine home and to leave his only son a snug little fortune.

Mrs. Bowles was a good housewife, and therefore a real helpmeet to her husband.

Their ambition was for their only son and heir to live on the farm, in a nice house, and to command a large vessel some day that traded along the coast, while they sat around the hearthstone to welcome him back from his voyages, and to play with his children, should he marry and be blessed with a family.

On one occasion, some two years before the Rockaway is introduced to the reader, Skipper Bowles, and his son, Matt, had an adventure that well-nigh cut short their usefulness.

Skipper Bowles had a chance to make a snug little sum by running a gentleman's yacht up to the city, as the amateur crew, in the face of ugly weather, concluded to desert the craft and go by land.

The skipper urged that it was best to wait for the storm to blow over; but the owner said no; so they started, with two others to help them.

They were hardly well off shore when the fiercest of hurricanes swept the sea, and the yacht, though stanch, soon showed signs of distress. Every sea broke over her, and one of the two men was washed away, to perish in the storm-riven sea.

Then the slender masts went by the board, and the next moment Skipper Bowles found himself and his son clinging to the yacht's lifeboat, which was full of water, and the other man had gone down with the foundered craft.

Thus they were driven, clinging for their lives, all through the night, and when morning came they were well-nigh completely exhausted; they knew that the end was near, unless help came, for the sea yet ran mountains high, though the storm was breaking away.

But, help did come, for an odd-looking schooner, the hull painted blue and the rails a dingy red, hove in sight. Its crew saw the lifeboat and the half-dead sailors clinging to it, and bore down upon them.

"Lordy, Saint Matthew! It's a pirit," cried the skipper, excitedly.

"Then we is fixed," assumed Matt, whatever being fixed meant.

A hail from the strange craft, as it luffed up near, and the question:

"Are you able to swim to the schooner?"

"No, mate!" came the faint reply. "We is too used up."

"Hold on then!"

A moment after a man sprung into the sea; to launch a boat would have been madness; and the bold swimmer at last reached the sunken lifeboat.

He had a rope about his waist, and made it fast to the bow rings.

In an unknown tongue he called out to those on the schooner, and they at once proceeded to haul the boat under the schooner's lee.

"You are all right, now," the rescuer said, cheerily, as the swamped lifeboat drew near, and ropes were thrown, which he tied around the waists of the two half-drowned sailors.

That done, they were drawn by strong hands on board; the daring fellow who had risked his life to save them came

next; the lifeboat was lifted end up, then down, on deck, and the schooner stood away on her course.

Back to their home Skipper Bowles and his son were taken, their rescuers kindly landing them on their own beach, near to their very door.

Skipper Bowles offered to repay them liberally for their time and service, but they refused, and the schooner sailed away.

That craft with red sails was the home of the wandering Gypsies of the Sea!

CHAPTER XLIII.

FOR LOVE OF GOLD.

Around his fireside on winter evenings, Skipper Bowles, his wife, and son were wont to talk over their rescue by the bold Sea Gypsies, and wonder what had ever become of them.

There was also a lingering desire in the heart of the skipper that he might some day see the strange vessel again and its strange crew.

And, singularly enough, this wish was gratified, for while the Rockaway was anchored off Barnegat Light one day, and Bowles and his son were busily fishing, a craft hove in sight.

She was not sighted until near the Rockaway, and then Skipper Bowles fairly howled to his son:

"Matt! Matt! there is the Sea Gypsy!"

It was true; there came the blue-hulled, red-sailed schooner, fairly flying along down the coast!

She luffed when near the Rockaway, dropped anchor, and at once her crew begun to fish.

But soon a small boat put off from her side, containing but one occupant.

"It's ther feller as saved us, Matt!"

"Yes, daddy!"

"He's a comin' ter call, civil like."

"Yes, dad!"

The light boat ran alongside the fisher schooner, and Gypsy Soto sprung on board.

He grasped the hands warmly of both father and son, and sat down with the air of one who had something to talk about.

"How are you getting along, mate?" he asked.

"Waal, so-so, for times is a leetle dull, capting."

"How would you like to make, say, a couple of thousand on a short cruise?"

Skipper Bowles nearly broke his head against the main-boom as he sprung to his feet.

"A couple o' thousand, capting? You mean hundreds, and that's big pay."

"I mean just what I say—thousands."

"Lordy!"

"I have a chance to make five thousand dollars at a time, and I'll give you two thousand if you'll do the work for me."

"The truth is, I do not wish to go back into New York harbor, for two of my best men got into trouble there and would be taken by the police."

"A lady was drowned some time ago," he went on, "and some say she was murdered; but there is a reward of five thousand dollars offered for the return of her body."

"My! they must have loved her a heap."

"Oh, yes; but, as they are rich, they are quite able to offer a big sum. Now mates, I have to tell you that I have found the body."

"You has?"

"Yes, on the sands at Barnegat Inlet. I wish you to take it up to the home of the gentleman who offers the reward; that is all you'll have to do."

"I saved your life, and I want you to do me a favor, you and your son."

"We'll do it."

"And you can help yourselves at the same time."

"Waal, what are it, as we wants ter show you our gratitude."

"As I said, I do not wish to run into

New York harbor, so you can take the body in the hold of your vessel, run up to Glen Idle, up the Hudson, ask for Doctor Dudley Norman, and tell him you have found the lady's body."

"But, you found her."

"Yes, but don't mention me in the matter; be very careful about that. Just say you found her at the inlet beach, and, having read the offered reward, you recognized her from her description, and so brought the remains to him. You must see him alone, no one else; and more: you must take him on board the sloop at night, and show him the body if he wishes to see it."

"Yes, capting."

"Tell him you will turn it over to him, or do as he wishes, and give him this ring, which you can say you took from her finger."

The skipper took the ring gingerly, and then heard the further instructions of the Sea Gypsy; all of which he faithfully carried out, as we already have recorded.

The errand was not one to the coast skipper's liking; but the big pay, and his obligation to the gypsy, were incentives to a careful obedience to instructions.

The duty done, the coaster returned to Barnegat Inlet again, where the Sea Gypsy schooner had awaited the Rockaway's return.

All seemed satisfactory to Soto, and the red-sail craft soon thereafter left for parts unknown, while Skipper Bowles went home to tell his wife his quite remarkable story of how he earned so much money, yet suppressing all concerning the Sea Gypsy.

"We picked up a body, as there was a reward for," he explained, "but, as it may not be ther right one, I guesses you'd better never mention it, Ann Elizabeth, to a livin' soul, for they might come back on us for the money, if they know'd, which, as it stands, they don't know whar to find us."

This advice kept Mrs. Ann Elizabeth Bowles as close as a clam on the subject, and she at once begun to build "castles in Spain," by drawing the plans for a substantial two-thousand-dollar house on the farm.

What they already had laid by would erect outhouses, fences, build a new wharf, and improve the farm.

"We is gittin' rich, Ann Elizabeth, and another haul o' that floater kind would make us like unto millionaires."

"Then we could buy a yacht and take those summer folks cruising, couldn't we, Matt?"

"Yes, dad," replied Matthew, who, though a youth of few words, was a thorough sailor, and had an ambition to some day command a pleasure craft to take out summer guests, at the watering places along the coast, for short cruises, which he knew paid well.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ANOTHER PLOT FOR GOLD.

One Saturday night, several months after the Rockaway had taken the body to Glen Idle, the little sloop was standing in toward Barnegat Inlet, her skipper hoping to drop anchor by midnight before the Bowles homestead by the sea.

"I guesses we'll git in all right, Matt, for ther wind holds on fresh yet," the old sea wayfarer observed.

"Yes, dad; I hopes so, but yender is a sail comin' right astern. See it?"

"Sartin, sure, Matt. It's right in our wake," which was true, for not a mile away came a schooner flying along after the sloop. A moment's observation of it, then the skipper said:

"Matt, see them lights?"

"Yes, dad; they is red, green, blue, and yellor."

"Them's the Sea Gypsies' colors, yer know."

"Yes, dad."

"Then we lays to;" and as Matt had

the tiller the skipper attended to the sheet ropes and the next moment the sloop lay to.

"Maybe it's another floater," suggested Matt.

"I dunno; but I hopes thar is money in ther comin'."

The vessel astern ran up near, lay to, and a boat left her side, and Soto soon sprung on board the coaster.

"I was just going to run in and see you, mates," the gypsy announced.

"Waal, yer'd a bin welcome, capting."

"I've got another little job for you to do."

"Another floater?"

"No, but there is money in it, mate."

"What's ter be did?"

"I'll tell you. I wish you to run up to town with me and two more of my men. We are to anchor up in the Hudson River, above the city, and I'll attend to the balance, which is to get a girl into my possession—"

"Lordy, capting, are it a runaway match?"

"No runaway match. Simply, I am determined to make a man pay me big money to get the girl back again; that is all."

"I mean her no harm, of course, and to prove it will tell you that she is a lovely little maid of thirteen or fourteen years, and an heiress to a large fortune."

"I wish to capture her and give her to you to take care of for a week or so."

"She need not know any more than that she is held for ransom, as she will be, and you can have your wife come on board to look after her, for it is best not to take her to your home."

"When her guardian, which is the same man who paid you for the body, is willing to hand over the sum I shall demand, you can sail up to his home and give the girl up to him, getting the reward, and you shall have just as much as I gave you before. It will not take more than a week to do it all; but if it does, I'll give you five hundred dollars more. Good money, easily earned."

The skipper's eyes glistened, and Matt begun to feel that he was already a millionaire's son.

After some further parleying the arrangements were made, and the Rockaway headed for an anchorage in the Hudson.

Two of the gypsy crew had been laying in wait about Glen Idle, as prearranged. When the sloop hove in sight the right occasion quickly offered, for Violet was found out on the grounds by herself; the men in ambush easily seized her and bore her to the sloop, which at once set sail for Barnegat Bay.

With a guilty conscience Skipper Bowles entered the inlet by night, with his charge; his wife was brought off to care for the captive, and the Rockaway headed at once for the North Shrewsbury River, where, under pretense of oystering, she would be near the Sea Gypsy captain when he came to order the commander of the little sloop to take the heiress back to Glen Idle and get the ransom money, for this was to be arranged with her guardian in the meantime.

CHAPTER XLV.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

When the discovery was made that Violet was missing, there was great excitement with all in the Glen Idle mansion.

Jennie, her maid, was nearly frantic, remembering the attempt to kidnap her in Virginia, and it was her suggestion which caused Randolph Norman to believe she had been abducted, rather than that an accident had happened to her.

Inquiry among the workmen on the place discovered that a sloop had been lying at anchor in the basin above, and which had been lately known as the Gypsy's Harbor.

This sloop had sailed toward night, going down the river.

Norman recalled that it was a sloop which Duke Sanford had seen in Virginia waters, so he was convinced that it was the parties who had before attempted to kidnap his ward who now had successfully carried out their intention.

Of course they could have but one motive—to secure a large ransom for her.

He gritted his teeth savagely at the thought, for it would draw upon his pocket again; but then, he must have his ward back, or he could never hope to get her riches in the end.

That was one thing which held him in check, for Walter Vernon had so invested Violet's inheritance that it could not be drawn upon, and every dollar of interest remained in hand to swell the principal.

When she was eighteen, all would be hers.

But the other half, with the income arising from the lands about Glen Idle, was all in the control of the man he had trusted.

Out of this he was, of course, to pay all expenses and educate Violet, while Glen Idle was also to be kept up, to be turned over to her in good shape when she received her fortune.

It was a very generous sum, too, and, but for the gambling mania which possessed Randolph Norman, it would have enabled him to lay by a very large portion of the income.

But, so far, he had drawn it down to a very small sum, comparatively, in bank, and he knew that soon he must begin to draw upon the fortune itself, at the rate he had been letting the gold slip through his hands.

So he could not let Violet be lost to him, if he had to pay any amount to get her back.

To put it in the papers would be to have it perhaps reach the eyes of Walter Vernon and cause trouble.

Then it would attract attention again to himself and Glen Idle, which he was most anxious to avoid.

So he called all of his servants together, and told them that he was certain Miss Violet had been kidnapped, and for the purpose of getting money out of him.

If he advertised her loss, it would only delay the abductors in bringing her back; therefore, he wished not a word said of it, and would vouch for it that some one would soon appear to negotiate for her return.

Two days passed after the abduction, and as Norman was pacing to and fro on the piazza, he beheld an organ grinder coming up the gravel walk.

He was about to order the vagabond musician away, when the man said:

"Donta getta mad a' my moosic. Donta wanta play. Wanta talka about seniorita."

Norman started, for he knew what this meant.

The man had brought him news of Violet.

Glancing about him to see that none of the servants were about, he said:

"Come up here, my man."

The invitation was promptly obeyed. The organ was placed upon the top step of the piazza.

"What did you say about seniorita?" demanded Norman, almost fiercely, of the black-bearded, long-haired man.

"Seniorita gona?"

"You stole her, you rascal!"

"Oh, no! no! senior! I was gooda man."

"I have a mind to have you thrown in jail until you confess where my ward is."

"If senior please; but, betta not. Pay mona, and getta seniorita. Putta me in locka-up, me talka about senior—tella badda story."

"You kidnapped her, did you not?"

"Oh, no; but badda man take senior-

ita, and tella me come tella senior pay five thousand dolla and getta seniorita."

"Where is she?"

"If senior know, he no paya monna."

"When can you bring her back?"

"Two days."

"How?"

"Boata come ponda—two day, at sunset; senior coma with monna; paya and getta seniorita."

"I'll be there, and if you play me false, I'll have men there to capture you."

"If senior playa false to kidnappa, will tella heapa stora on senior."

"I'll be there, and all will be right. Now go."

"Thanka, senior. Playa moosic," and the man struck up "Viva Garibaldi," which drove Norman hurriedly into the mansion.

CHAPTER XLVI.

DUKE SANFORD TAKES A SAIL.

On the shores of the North Shrewsbury River there dwelt, at the time of which I write, a family by the name of Duke, who prided themselves upon their ancestry.

There home was a fine one, and stood upon the highlands of the north shore, until a few years ago, when it gave place to the more modern residences of the New York millionaires who went there to "Summer by the Sea."

Mrs. Sanford of Virginia had been a Miss Duke, and it was her brother whom her son, Duke, had gone to visit on his way to enter the West Point Military Academy.

He looked forward with considerable pleasure to a week or two to be passed with his aunt and uncle, before settling down to the life of a soldier.

He had written to Violet that he would make this visit, and take a day off to run up and see her and her guardian, before coming for his visit of a few days on his way to the "Point."

He arrived at the Highlands, to receive a most affectionate welcome from his uncle and aunt.

Major Duke had a very trim cat-rigged boat, and the day after his arrival Duke went for a sail in it.

He ran up the river for some distance, to suddenly come upon a sloop at anchor there.

Now, there was nothing strange in this; but, somehow, the sloop had a familiar look in Duke's eyes.

On the deck sat a youth about his own age, and he alone was visible.

Running close in, Duke held in under the stern, and his hand almost let go the tiller as he read the name:

"Rockaway, of Barnegat Bay."

Of an impulsive nature, he at once put his helm down and ran alongside of the sloop, for he remembered her as the craft which had been at anchor in the river in Virginia to carry off Violet.

He had no design in boarding, other than to see just who the people of the vessel were, and thus discover how it was they had attempted to kidnap the young heiress.

As he glided up to the sloop, he sprang forward, seized his painter, and leaped on board.

"What on arth did you do thet fer? Dad, come here! A young feller has boarded us!" cried Matt, taken by surprise, for he supposed the catboat was going about, or intended passing by.

Then, from the cabin, came a wild cry: "Oh, save me! for I am a captive here!"

Duke Sanford was startled, for he knew that voice!

Out of the cabin rushed Captain Bowles, and he beheld his son confronted by a tall young man, with a fine, athletic form and a handsome, resolute face.

Matt had stepped toward Duke Sanford, as though to hurl him back into his boat; but there was a look in the face of the stranger that seemed to dare him to attempt it.

Out came the skipper, and he seemed to be also taken aback.

There was no longer any cry from the cabin for help; he had seen to that, for he had thrust his captive into the one little stateroom forward of the cabin, and Ann Elizabeth Bowles stood guard over her.

"Waal, Matt, what's the racket?"

"Why, dad, this feller jist boarded us uninvited like. Shall I toss him back into his boat?"

"No, don't do it. Leave me ter talk ter him."

"Well, talk fast, for I heard a cry for help, and I'm not one to let it go unanswered. What have you to say, old man?" demanded Duke, peremptorily.

"What does yer want aboard my craft, young man?"

"I'll tell you in a word. I am visiting up yonder, on the hill, but I live in Virginia, and some time ago I saw this very craft in Virginia waters."

"She came there for no good, for a young girl was kidnapped by two villains, and if I had not killed one of them they would have gotten off with her."

"The other man was captured and hanged to a tree by the people."

"Now, I was sailing by, recognized the craft and her name, and as I came aboard I hear a cry for help from the cabin."

"Give up the captive you have, or I will make it so hot for you that you'll likely be swung up to a tree ashore, as the other villain was."

"There is little breeze; you cannot escape out of the river; so do as I say, or take the consequences!"

The skipper was terribly frightened and turned pale; so he sought to hedge.

"Mate, I has heerd yer in patience, and I desire to say as how this craft were chartered by bad men fer a run to Virginia waters, and, as I larnt arterwards, for an evil purpose."

"Then, agin, some parties chartered me for a run inter York harbor, and a leetle gal were brought on board, and my wife were axed ter take keer o' her fer a few days."

"They said as how she were a leetle light in ther upper story, and they would call fer her in a few days."

"So we tuk her, and she are in ther cabling, and thet are all ther is to it."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, captain," said Duke, after an instant of thought.

"Waal."

"Let me see the girl, and if I know her, and I believe I do, then I'll take her, if I have to take your life to do it!"

"I'll tell yer, mate, what I'll do," and the skipper betrayed his deep excitement.

"Well?"

"I'll give her up, if yer'll say on yer honor, I kin git up anchor and go free, and yer won't prosecute me fer what I hev' did, not knowin' it were wrong."

"Agreed! Now show me your captive," said Duke Sanford, and he still stood aloof, determined not to be caught in a trap himself.

CHAPTER XLVII.

SURPRISES ALL AROUND.

"Has I yer pledge, mate, that me, mine, and my sloop are ter go free, and yer will not prosecute us?" demanded Skipper Bowles, as he moved toward the cabin.

"I do."

"Yer means it, for though I are a honest man, I has sense enough to see what I has did may git me inter a peck o' trouble."

"I will keep my word, as I promise you."

"Waal, come inter ther cabling and see ther leetle ledy."

"No, I am no fool, old man. Let her come on deck."

"Yer is scared?"

"Not scared at all. Simply, I am not to be caught."

"Maybe you is right; but I intended yer no harm."

"Bring out the one you have, then!"

Skipper Bowles sighed heavily, and went into the sloop's cabin.

There stood his wife in the companion way, her face very pale, for she had heard all.

In the stateroom was Violet, a quiet, but attentive, listener.

"Whar be she?" asked the skipper.

"In ther cuddy, and I'll git her, 'cause we don't want ter do nothin' as hain't right," replied Mrs. Bowles.

"Say, puss, yer is wanted out here, and it do look as though we had done wrong in keepin' yer; but, then, it are ther fault o' them as fetched yer to us."

Violet made no reply, but hastened out of the little stateroom, and sprang to the deck.

"Oh, Duke!"

"Violet!"

And they grasped hands in their delight.

"How came you here?" asked Duke, excitedly.

"Kidnapped."

"By these people?"

"Oh, no, by others, who brought me on board, and I really believed did deceive these people about me, for they have been very kind to me."

"I am glad to hear that. But come; get into my boat, for my uncle Duke lives up yonder on the hill. Are you ready?"

"Yes, indeed, I am!" and Violet leaped down into the catboat.

"Captain, I advise you to lose no time in getting up your anchor and setting sail out of this, for when I tell my story there may be those who will want to punish you, in spite of all that I can do. You can get down to Sandy Hook by the time I reach the house yonder, and—"

There was no need to say more, for, while Matt had sprung to the anchor, his father was already setting the sail.

As the cat-rig swung off to the breeze, the sloop began to move, and by the time that Duke Sanford was heading for the Highlands dock, the Rockaway was under all the canvas she could set, flying down the river toward the lower bay.

As Duke at length reached the mansion with Violet the Rockaway was crossing the Horse Shoe and flying along toward Sandy Hook, under a freshening breeze and with night coming on.

Entering the mansion, Duke introduced Violet to his aunt and uncle and soon told his story.

"That fellow ought to be hanged," declared Major Duke, going out upon the piazza to look out for the sloop.

But, darkness had fallen upon the sea, and with it had come rain, so that nothing could be seen.

A telegram at once was sent to Glen Idle, as follows:

"To Doctor Dudley Norman,

"Glen Idle Manor,

"Above Washington Heights,

"New York.

"Rescued from my kidnappers to-day by Duke Sanford. Safe and well. Start for home to-morrow under escort of Duke.

Violet."

"Curses upon that boy! He has saved her again, and at that rate she will fall so desperately in love with him, I will never be able to win her from him. This must be stopped!"

So said Randolph Norman, when the telegram was handed to him, as he sat in his library, happy in the thought that he had arranged for the restoration of his ward at the sum of five thousand dollars with the pretended organ grinder.

In amazement at Violet's dispatch, he yet must bide his time until her arrival,

when he could discover just what had happened, and decide what it meant for him.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A VISIT FROM THE GYPSY.

The organ grinder who had appeared at Glen Idle and negotiated with Randolph was none other than Soto, the Sea Gypsy.

The gypsies having discovered that it was easy to get money from the master of Glen Idle, determined to work that mine for all there was in it for them.

They had been paid to do away with the governess, and their money had been forthcoming.

And again, through the skipper, Lute Bowles, they had secured three thousand more of the reward.

Then it occurred to Soto to "strike it rich" again, and he had attempted to kidnap Violet, in Virginia.

Foiled by Duke Sanford's pluck, he had not given it up, but once more made the attempt, and with success.

Having her in his power, he had visited Glen Idle, and obtained the pledge of ransom money, so had but to go after the captive.

He returned to New York City, and leaving his hand organ at the place where he had hired it, went to the Astoria Ferry, and there found one of his crew awaiting him in a small sailboat which belonged to the gypsy schooner.

He took the tiller when his man had raised sail, and headed up the Sound.

In due time he reached Flushing Bay, where the schooner was at anchor.

Ten minutes later sail was set and she was going down the East River on her way past New York.

Soto had planned so as to pass by night. He did not, just then, care to have his weird-looking schooner seen and attract attention.

It was not dawn, when, before a good breeze, he ran up to where the Rockaway had been at anchor.

He had left her there and gone on to New York, in his little boat; but the sloop was surely gone.

He sailed along the shore looking for her, and meeting an oyster boat, hailed and asked about the sloop.

She had left the evening before, rounded the hook, and headed south, the man replied.

So, all sail was set, and the schooner headed out of the river.

Had Violet, the next morning, at an early hour, glanced out of her window across the Shrewsbury and the narrow neck of land that forms Sandy Hook opposite the Highlands, she would have recognized the gypsy schooner; but, when she did look out, the strange craft was far in the distance.

"A strange craft passed down just after sunrise this morning, heading south. It had a blue hull, and red sails, like you told me the schooner of the Sea Gypsies had, Violet," said Duke Sanford at breakfast.

"Yes, it is the Sea Gypsy schooner, for I have seen her pass several times," said his uncle, and he added:

"But, I don't wish to hurry you, Miss Violet; yet we have to hasten to catch the boat from Red Bank, if, as you say, you must go home to-day."

"Oh, yes, sir; I must return, for I suppose Gardy is even now wild about me, although he must have my dispatch by this time," and then hastened to catch the boat, Violet little dreaming that the appearance of the Sea Gypsies' schooner in those waters had aught to do with her abduction.

And on sailed the red-sail schooner, under shortened sail, as Soto had no desire to run into Barnegat Bay in daylight, so it was after sunset when he headed into the inlet.

She went in slowly, and dropped anchor off the home of Skipper Bowles.

There lay the Rockaway at anchor, but no one was on board of her.

Landing, Soto made his way to the skipper's home, and his hail soon brought old Lute to the door.

He was frightened, without doubt; but, recognizing the Sea Gypsy, he asked him in, and told him just what had occurred.

"That cursed boy again! It was he who killed Mona and Vara.

"Now he comes here and saves the girl when the gold was as good as in my hand. I do not blame you, my friend, for you could do nothing; but, another time we will—"

"We won't, Mate Gypsy, for I has had a lesson and been scared nigh into fits. No, I has helped you all I kin, so let us part good friends, and not a cent do I want for the last trip."

"Well, you know best, and I act alone; but, skipper, don't talk, for gypsies remember! We part friends. I'll git the money yet. Good-by."

Soto left the house, to the great joy of the skipper, and soon after the weird schooner sailed away.

"That ends it, Ann Elizabeth and Matthew—making money in an unsquare way. We'll be honest in future," avowed the old coaster; and he stuck to his resolution.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BACK TO GLEN IDLE.

The dispatch from Violet was a cause of more anxiety to Randolph Norman than he cared to admit.

He was almost bewildered with doubt, apprehension, and fear as to what it all boded for him.

He gave orders for the carriage to meet each train, and let the servants know about the dispatch he had received.

The afternoon train brought Violet, whom Mrs. Duke had rigged up to look as well as possible on the way home, for she had only been in her everyday suit when kidnapped.

Duke Sanford was with her, a proud smile upon his fine face, proving how pleased he was that he had again saved the little maiden, whom he loved with all the warmth of his young heart.

Randolph Norman gave them both a hearty welcome, and asked his ward to tell him all that had happened, for he was even more anxious to know it than she could imagine.

She told of her having gone out to seek him, and how she had been suddenly caught down by the gypsy camp and carried in a boat to the sloop.

Then she gave the story of her captivity, of how the vessel had been run down the harbor and into the Shrewsbury, and how Duke Sanford had happened on board.

"Why, it is like a romance, my child; but, thank Heaven, you are back again, safe at home, and I will see that you are not kidnapped again."

"I have also to thank you, my young friend, for, though they would not have harmed Violet, they would have made me pay a round sum for her release. Already I was negotiating with a rascal for her restoration to me. I only wish I could get hold of him."

"Now go, Violet, and make the acquaintance of Mrs. Scott, the new housekeeper, who came to-day, and get ready to join us soon, at dinner, for I will look to the comfort of Master Duke."

Violet was glad, indeed, to get back to her own room again, and she took an instant fancy to Mrs. Scott, who came to congratulate her on her safe return, as did all of the servants, while Jessie wept with delight, as she was deeply attached to her young mistress.

Duke was shown to an elegant room, and made to feel at home, while Randolph went to his library.

"Yes, it will end in a love affair which I shall never be able to break, so I must get her into the convent, where he cannot correspond with her. For four years

he will be like one in prison, at West Point, and by the time he graduates I will take good care that she shall have become my wife.

"But I wonder if that infernal organ grinder will dare call on me, now that she has been brought back?"

"Well, I saved my five thousand dollars through the boy's pluck and good luck. I have that to thank him for, at least," and Randolph turned to greet his young guest, who just then entered the library.

CHAPTER L.

RANDOLPH NORMAN'S CONSCIENCE.

The visit of Duke Sanford was a pleasant one to him, whatever it might have been to the master of Glen Idle.

He tried to be the courtly host, and appeared to be anxious to make the youth's stay most agreeable; but, somehow, the demon in his nature would master him at times.

With a perfect knowledge of her guardian's disposition and moods, Violet realized that something was wrong, and she determined to fathom the cause.

This did not take long, for, intuitively, she saw, girl though she was, that Norman was jealous of her Boy Hero!

At first she was indignant, then it amused her.

Duke, also, discovered that something was wrong with his host, try as he did to hide it; yet the boy could not think it was jealousy of him, so he set it down to anxiety proceeding from this second abduction.

In his heart Duke did not like the man, and somehow had distrusted his sincerity from the moment he met him at Rose Hill. Why he should distrust he really could not explain; but the feeling was firmly fixed in his mind, and kept him, almost unconsciously, on an anxious seat, when in the presence of the master of Glen Idle.

The visit at length ended, and the youth arranged to go to New York, preparatory to entering the academy at West Point.

The day he departed he stood with Violet upon the piazza. The carriage had not yet come around which was to take him to the boat landing.

"Violet," suddenly spoke the young Virginian, "you are but a girl, and I certainly am not a man yet; but we can both love and hate, I know, and I wish you to learn to love me, for, some day, I will come to you and ask you to be my wife—"

He ceased, for the guardian was quickly approaching.

Violet's face was crimsoned with blushes, which she knew her guardian must see.

Had he overheard what Duke had said? She could but feel that he had. Indeed, his very manner indicated as much to her questioning eyes.

Duke Sanford went his way, and Violet so plainly showed how much she missed him that her guardian decided to still keep her at Glen Idle, and not to send her to the convent, at least to board.

He bought for her a little carriage and horse and gave her a special driver, to be driven daily to and from the convent.

Mrs. Scott was an estimable, middle-aged lady, the widow of a clergyman, and was a good chaperone when Violet needed one, and Randolph Norman felt satisfied with his new arrangement.

This the young girl rather liked, for she dearly loved Glen Idle, and her charming rooms there, while she was not under the restraint she would be if a boarder at the school.

Dinner she always had with her guardian and Mrs. Scott; but at breakfast she had that estimable lady only for company, as Norman never rose before nine o'clock.

Norman had had several letters from Mr. Frederick Breton, in which that worthy always sang the same tune, to this effect:

"I fear your loved brother is failing

daily, sir, for his appetite is not so good, he is growing thinner, and becomes more violent.

"Be prepared, sir, to hear of his departure from life within a few more months.

"The nurse I recommended for Mr. Vernon writes me that he, too, is failing fast; but, all is done that can be for the unfortunate sufferers, and we leave the rest to Providence."

At which the Lucifer of it all would smile sardonically.

"When they die and Breton, too, is out of the way, my anxieties will all be at rest, and not until then," said this veritable genius of evil.

CHAPTER LI.

A VALET'S CLAIM.

The Lucifer of Glen Idle begun to feel better, as the weeks passed and no other attempt was made to get possession of Violet.

Then, too, letters from Doctor Antisane's Cure-all Sanitarium seemed more satisfactory, and the surgeon in charge of the asylum where Walter Vernon was had written him that, from some reason, his patient was getting into a worse condition.

So the master of Glen Idle secretly rejoiced over his good fortune!

Of late Violet had taken to reading the papers, and her quick eyes had discovered something which her guardian had not seen, or, if seeing, had failed to read to her.

It was a notice of

"A Daring Horseback Feat!"

"A Young Virginian's Pluck!"

Then it went on to tell how a new cadet at the academy had boldly ridden down the dangerous pathway along the cliff known as "Lovers' Walk," to the admiration of his fellows, and the applause of many others who had witnessed his daring feat.

The article went on to say:

"The hero of this bold deed is Cadet Duke Sanford, who comes from an old Southern family, long connected with both the army and navy of the United States.

"Cadet Sanford is a handsome, fearless-faced youth of eighteen, well formed and an athlete, being the champion of his class.

"It is said that few of his fellow-cadets care to face him when he has the gloves on, and he came to the Point a skilled hand with the foils, having been taught by his uncle, Major Rodney Duke, of New Jersey, who was the best swordsman at the academy in his day.

"He came to the Point with a record of having, on one occasion, killed a tramp whom he caught robbing a lady school teacher, and who attacked him. On another occasion, he saved a young heiress from being abducted by two villains, so says the Weekly Truth Teller of Virginia.

"We predict for Cadet Sanford a brilliant career in the future."

The brow of Randolph Norman darkened as Violet read this glowing account of her Boy Hero, and she noticed it.

Some time after there was another account of Duke Sanford having saved a lad who had broken through the ice while skating, and had done so at the risk of his own life by plunging in among the pieces of shattered ice.

Again did Randolph Norman have to hear the account read, and between his shut teeth came a bitter execration.

But, Violet heard the utterance, though she did not appear to, and it gave her more food for thought.

One day, soon after this incident, while Violet was at school, a visitor called to see Randolph Norman.

This visitor he received coolly.

"Well, sir, how can I serve you?" he demanded.

The caller was well dressed and had the appearance of a foreigner.

"You do not seem to remember me, Mr. Norman," and the speaker slipped into a chair uninvited.

"Your face is familiar, but I do not recall you."

"I was your valet, sir, in Baltimore, then known as Pedro."

"Ha! I recall you now; but I have no work for you now, Pedro."

"I did not ask for any, Mr. Norman; but your eyes are not so keen in recalling faces as one would think, for I have met you since those days in Baltimore, and yet you did not remember me."

"Nor do I care to remember any old servant I have had. If you need aid, say so, and I will help you, but if not say what you do want, for I am very busy."

"Mr. Norman—"

"I am Doctor Norman."

"I knew that you had a twin brother who was a doctor, but I did not know that you had that title."

"Will you state your business with me and be off?"

"Money!"

"I knew it. Here is a ten-dollar note, and—"

"Mr. Norman, I don't want ten dollars—see, I have several hundreds with me."

"What in Heaven's name do you want, then?"

"Five thousand!"

"Do you think I am a fool, that you make such a demand upon me, simply because you once served me for a couple of months as a valet?"

"No, it is because I know you are not a fool that I make the demand, and also on account of having served you as a valet for a few months."

"Ha! you expect to blackmail me, do you?"

"No, to make a request, and if you do not grant it, to make a demand. I want five thousand dollars, Mr. Norman."

"You'll not get it."

"You refuse?"

"I do."

"Then I demand it."

"I have a notion to kick you out of my home."

"Your home! Pah! And a kick, eh? Try it on at your peril! Now to business, Mr. Randolph Norman!" and the visitor's demeanor was decidedly aggressive.

"I first saw you one night when you, with a party of friends, were visiting some rather wild places in the slums of Baltimore, and, but for me a man whom you threw out of your way would have knifed you.

"You offered me a place with you, for I said I was in need, and I was, then; I was in hard luck, for my vessel had sailed without me, and I was in distress.

"I took the place you offered, and so learned all about you.

"I was the one who secured the man to marry you to Miss Carrol, and you supposed that it was not a minister; but I pitied her sad fate, and so engaged a real clergyman, to protect her.

"I was your valet longer than you thought, for I was with you when you shot Mr. Bennett Carrol in the duel, and know that you wore a wire net, or shirt of mail, and that it saved your life.

"You owed me my wages, and deserted me in the town, leaving me practically penniless; but my ship came back, and I was all right once more.

"The next time we met, Mr. Norman, was on your grounds here, but you failed to recognize me, though I knew you, and yet I did not come here then expecting to see you.

"It was an accident; but I had my mustache then, and as Soto, the Gypsy, you did not know your old valet, Pedro of Baltimore.

"The Sea Gypsy Queen is my mother, and we are a people who cruise about at will.

"I was in bad luck, as I told you, when in Baltimore; but now I am captain of our craft, and I need five thousand dollars.

"You tell me you are Doctor Dudley Norman now, yet you admitted I was

your valet in Baltimore, and then you were Randolph Norman.

"I have no desire to push you hard, Mr. Norman, but I lately lost some money that, I may say, I had already made, but was euchred out of, so I come to you, naturally, for the sum."

"Did you not say you would never come near me again when I paid you the last money?"

"That was as Soto, the Sea Gypsy; but now I come as your old and attached valet."

"If I pay you the money you ask, you pledge yourself never to demand another dollar from me, as gypsy, valet, or any one else, or to let any of your accursed people do so?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Will you keep your promise?"

"I will."

"Then I shall pay you the money, and I swear to you, if ever you again come on my grounds, I will kill you at sight."

Then he arose and took from his safe, with a deep sigh, as though every dollar was a drop of his heart's blood, the sum of hush money, demanded by the man, and counted it out to him.

"There is your money, so be off, and remember my threat, for I mean it, so help me Heaven!"

The gypsy pocketed the money and departed, leaving Randolph Norman in a frame of mind by no means enviable or amiable.

CHAPTER LII.

THE TELL-TALE BLANK.

The papers were full of the "terrible affair"—the burning of an insane asylum in which a number of the unfortunate inmates had been lost.

Violet heard it the moment she reached school, and going to the Mother Superior asked her permission to return home, as she had an intimate friend there.

Her own carriage had gone back to Glen Idle, so she took a hack from a stable near by and drove home.

Norman was just coming out of his room to his usual late breakfast, when Violet, white-faced, but calm, met him, as she came in.

"Gardy, the asylum where poor papa is was burned to the ground night before last. I heard it at the convent, so returned at once. Have you any telegrams about it?"

The man was startled, but a strange look passed over his face—a look that Violet could not read.

He stepped to his seat at the dining-room table and grasped his mail.

There was no letter, no telegram from the asylum, so he turned to the morning paper, to find in it the full account of the calamity and the names of the dead.

That of Walter Vernon was not there. Then Pierre came in with a telegram which had just arrived.

It read:

"To

"Doctor Dudley Norman:

"Too worried and hard worked to wire before. Mr. Vernon is not injured, and has gone with his attendant to Doctor Antisane's Sanitarium. His effects were all lost.
L. Warmouth, M. D."

"Thank God!" came fervently from Violet's lips. "But why did poor, dear papa not come right home?"

The prayer was not echoed by the guardian, nor was the wish that he had come to Glen Idle.

There was another expression upon his face which Violet could not read.

"Your father, I fear, is not in a condition to come home, my child; but I must at once telegraph Doctor Antisane to give him the best of quarters, and get for him all that he needs."

"Who is Doctor Antisane, Gardy, for the telegram is signed Warmouth?"

"He is the doctor in charge of the Cure-all Retreat, or Sanitarium."

"You know him, then?"

"Ah, yes, I—that is, you know, I had some correspondence with him when your father first thought of going there."

Randolph Norman saw that he must be careful, for Violet was no longer a little child, and was now, evidently, thinking for herself.

At once he took up a pencil and wrote a message on the pad of telegraph blanks, read it to his ward, and dispatched it by a servant to the station.

What he read to Violet was:

"To

"Doctor Antisane.

"Physician in charge, &c.

"Give to Mr. Walter Vernon your very best rooms, and every luxury without regard to cost. Write me fully regarding him, and draw on me for all articles he may need to purchase.

"Dudley Norman, M. D."

"You are so good, Gardy," said Violet, who had decided not to go back to school that day, and as the gardener sent in to see the master, Norman, having finished his breakfast, left the table.

Violet took up the papers and telegraph blanks, to put them in the library, and her eyes fell upon the trace of words on the pad, which the pencil had distinctly impressed through the first sheet of paper.

"Why, I can read it," she said, and, as her guardian had read it to her, she felt that it was no betrayal of confidence, so read as follows:

"To

"Frederick Breton.

"Attendant Insane Ward,

"Cure-all Hospital, &c.

"Heard from Doctor Warmouth of burning of asylum and that Vernon was sent to Cure-all Hospital. Assume full charge of him and write me fully at once. Draw on me for all funds needed and do all in your power for his comfort."

"D. N."

This was certainly different from what her guardian had read, and she greatly wondered at it.

It was not even to the one whose name he had pretended to read out.

"For some reason Gardy is deceiving me," she murmured.

Pulling off the tell-tale blank, she carried it to her room, and all that day the beautiful young heiress was in a very thoughtful mood, which her guardian attributed to her father's narrow escape from an awful death.

CHAPTER LIII.

SERVING TWO MASTERS.

Two days after the burning of the asylum, a letter came from Doctor Warmouth. It was brief and to the point:

"I wired you of our fearful tragedy. Your friend Vernon escaped, and, as his attendant urged it, I let him go at once to Doctor Antisane's Cure-all Sanitarium, and he is now there.

"There is half a week's board due, for which I send bill, and will be thankful if you will remit, as we will need all funds now which it is possible to obtain, for we lost heavily."

The check was filled out; then Randolph turned to another letter.

It was from Mr. Frederick Breton, written in a very neat, clerk-like hand, and read as follows:

"My dear sir:

"Of course you have read full particulars regarding the asylum fire.

"I was there that very night, to see how my nurse was taking care of Mr. Vernon, so at once decided to bring the patient to this place, considering it best under all circumstances.

"Doctor Antisane gave him the rooms on the south corner on the same floor as your brother's, and they are equally as

elegant, so the price is the same—one hundred per week for patient and nurse.

"This will make your check for Doctor Antisane reach two hundred weekly, without extras, and the pay of myself and my assistant attendant.

"Kindly send checks on 1st and 15th of each month, and for our salaries included, and oblige.

"Mr. Vernon took the burning out to him, and I expect it will show itself against him in time.

"As for your brother, his condition is the same.

"Perhaps it would be well for you to run up here, if you care to do so.

"Your humble servant.

"Frederick Breton."

"P. S. The purchases I was compelled to make for Mr. Vernon, who lost everything, amount, as you see by within bills, to three hundred and fifty dollars.

"I paid the bills from my own money, so kindly send check and oblige."

"Money! Money! Thus it goes," and with an execration Randolph Norman wrote another check in favor of Frederick Breton, and sent it with a short letter.

"Two hundred weekly, not to speak of extras and the pay of the two attendants. I'll not get off with less than a thousand a month. It is expensive to keep insane people," and with a scowling face he left the room, muttering:

"Does the fool think I would go to that place again?"

Now, Mr. Breton had no such idea—he was not such a fool.

But the request for his principal in the game of life and death, as he then well knew it to be, to put in an appearance at the sanitarium sounded well; it showed that he was anxious to have himself investigated by his master.

But, he perfectly understood, as we shall see, that Randolph Norman would not care to come!

Had the Genius of Evil made the visit he would have been startled in deadly earnest!

Truth to say—Mr. Frederick Breton, of "Lon'on, Hengland," was serving two masters—or, indeed, three masters.

The attendant loved money—was avaricious; but, he had a tender heart, withal, and his contact with suffering had not made him callous.

Somehow he had begun to distrust his employer, even before he had visited him at Glen Idle, and after that visit he knew Randolph Norman to be a villain. So he began to take notes, and to secretly investigate affairs as opportunity offered.

He drew Dudley Norman into conversation, listening with interest deepening with each interview, and shorthand writing being one of his accomplishments, he took down all that was said.

Again and again he brought out the story from Dudley Norman, each time putting it down, when the poor man believed him only scribbling, and not listening attentively.

And each time the date was put on the slips, so they could be compared.

Then Mr. Breton asked his patient about one Walter Vernon.

Dudley told of his having saved his life, and this story, too, was gone over and over again.

"Where is this Mr. Vernon now?" asked Breton.

"I do not know, for I have never met him since we parted, after his recovery from his wound."

Then Mr. Breton asked him all about his brother, and the patient smiled sadly and said:

"You are only laughing at me, and urging me on, for you know my brother says that I am not Dudley Norman, but Randolph."

"That is why I am here; because he says I am insane, and you also think so. Great God! can it be true? Can I really have lost my mind?" he groaned.

"Mr. Norman, my idea is that you are not insane, and my advice to you is not

to worry, for I believe you are coming around all right."

"Thank you for those kind words, Breton," and the man was deeply moved, for they were the first words of encouragement that had been uttered.

After this Breton took a couple of days off and ran down to see Mr. Vernon.

He was known as Doctor Dudley Norman's confidential man, so had full permission to visit the patient.

"What have you done so far for the patient?" he asked the man whom he had employed as special nurse.

"Nothing out of the hordinary. 'Ave been waiting your hinstructions, has you told me," replied Juniper Berry, who was also a Cockney, and had been a schoolmate of Mr. Breton's in the old country.

"Very well," and Breton had a long talk with Mr. Vernon.

That was the night of the fire, and Walter Vernon and his nurse, Juniper Berry, went back with Breton to Prof. Antisane's Cure-all Sanitarium and "Private Retreat."

CHAPTER LIV.

WEAVING A WEB.

Walter Vernon was located in the rooms assigned to him at the Cure-all Sanitarium, and as Doctor Antisane saw that Frederick Breton knew his business, gave him no trouble, never objected to his "bill of extras," and seemed to have Doctor Dudley Norman's full confidence, he allowed him his way, so the rooms of Vernon were in the same wing with that of the patient Randolph Norman.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. Vernon, Breton had long conversations with him, and again he used his skill as a stenographer.

He soon made one discovery, to the effect that Mr. Vernon was variable in his moods.

His stories of the past agreed, but he seemed to distrust himself at times, and said that he was glad to be under restraint.

Mr. Breton decided in his own mind that there was a reason for all this, and he talked to him about his wound, and then examined it with the air of a man who knew what he was about.

"Mr. Vernon, I am sure that you can be cured wholly, sir, if you will do as I ask you."

"Gladly, my man!"

"Let me telegraph for Doctor Carter to visit you."

Many doctors had seen him, and all disagreed, and none had helped him; but he was willing to see the surgeon Breton referred to.

Mr. Breton telegraphed and advised the doctor to come prepared for an operation in surgery on a patient's skull.

The doctor came, examined his patient, was told that Doctor Dudley Norman had urged his being sent for, knew that a big fee was assured, and then told Breton:

"You ought to have been a surgeon, for you have diagnosed this case exactly. It is as you say, the bullet indented the skull just there, and when the bone is raised I believe he will have a mind as clear as ever."

"God grant it!" said Walter Vernon; whereupon the surgeon set to work, with Frederick Breton aiding him.

Doctor Carter was deservedly famous as a surgeon, and his skill soon did for Walter Vernon just what Frederick Breton said it would.

Then the surgeon was asked to have a talk with "the other lunatic," as Mr. Breton put it, and after an hour's conversation, he said:

"Breton, I fear I was over hasty in my decision in that man's case, and perhaps it would have been better not to have sent him here."

"But, you watch him closely and report, and when you consider him safe, I'll give you the certificate of discharge you wish for him."

Then Breton took the first thousand dollars paid him by Randolph Norman, for "fatal services to be performed" by him, and paid the doctor, who departed, very well pleased with his earnings, for a thirty-six hours' trip.

Mr. Vernon had, of course, to be kept quiet, the fresh wound had to heal, and he must have no excitement; so Mr. Juniper Berry was told to devote himself to him at all times.

One day, several weeks after the operation, Vernon was seated in his parlor, looking out at the scenery.

He appeared like a different person, and greeted Breton pleasantly as he entered.

"You seem all right, sir."

"I am wholly so, Breton, and never felt better in my life. When will you let me go to my home? For now that the cloud and mists have cleared from my brain, I feel anxious to see my loved daughter, and look to her future happiness."

"God bless you, Breton, for it was you who brought this perfect cure to me."

Breton took a seat and said:

"Mr. Vernon, I wish to have a very important talk with you, and I desire that you listen calmly to all I tell you."

"You need have no fear, for your daughter is safe and well, and there is nothing for you to worry about, only do not get excited, as there must now be no set-back to your health."

Vernon was uneasy, and asked anxiously:

"Has my daughter's guardian lost her fortune?"

"No, but it is of Mr. Norman I wish to speak. I wish to tell you what you did not know, but you must leave all to me in what is to be done. Can you trust me?"

"Certainly, and will."

"Now, as I said before, do not be anxious, for you will have no cause to worry. I know that you were half-demented at times, rendered so by that bullet wound; but I know now that you are wholly yourself again."

"I am aware that you, fearful of trusting yourself, went willingly to the asylum, and placed in the hands of another your fortune and your daughter's guardianship. But, when you did so, were you aware that Doctor Dudley Norman had a twin brother?"

"I was not."

"He had, and they were so near alike that few persons knew them apart. One was a doctor, and went West; the other was a lawyer, and remained East."

"Now, somehow, your letter to Doctor Dudley Norman, I am sure, reached the hands of his lawyer brother, Randolph, who, a fast man, extravagant and deeply in debt, played the desperate game of representing his brother; moreover, he headed off that brother by meeting him in Buffalo, pretending that he was insane, and sending him to an asylum."

"My God!"

"Do not get excited, Mr. Vernon, for it is all right now, as I was Mr. Norman's nurse."

"At first I deemed him insane, but I had occasion to visit Glen Idle, to see its master, and what I learned there convinced me that Randolph Norman was playing the boldest game for gold that I ever heard of mortal man daring to attempt."

"In fact, Mr. Vernon, while even your daughter believes him to be a noble man and all that is good, he is to-day at Glen Idle as its master, while his defrauded, shamefully used brother, Dudley, is an inmate of this very asylum."

"Great God! what a plot! what a human vampire he is."

"He is all that, sir; but I wish to have you meet Doctor Norman, the real one, who saved your life, and you will soon, by comparing notes, decide that there is no mistake, for there must be many little things which you will be able to recall between you that only the true rescuer could know."

"True, indeed, Breton, so let me go to him at once."

"No, I will bring him here, for I have to prepare him to meet you, though he now knows that his brother has cruelly wronged him," and Breton left the room and sought that of Dudley Norman.

CHAPTER LV.

THE WEB WOVEN.

Doctor Dudley Norman was pacing to and fro in his room when Frederick Breton entered. He had been told that he was indeed not insane, and that for certain purposes his brother had placed him there; but he did not know the whole truth, and Breton, as he entered, remarked:

"Sit down, Doctor Norman, for I have something to tell you."

Dudley silently obeyed, and Breton said:

"I told you that your brother had placed you here in order to play a bold game for his own advantage. You know that he pays most liberally, and so must have plenty of money. That money he got through his startling resemblance to you. In other words, he has played Dudley Norman the past two years and more."

"You have told me how you saved the life of a California miner, and had not met him since; but, it was not his fault, for he sought to find you, and at last addressed a letter to you to your old home, where your brother Randolph received it, I am confident, and, being in need of money, played a daring, dangerous, desperate game to get it."

"The letter was from Mr. Walter Vernon, telling you he believed he was going insane, and should enter an asylum, and it gave to you the power of attorney over his fortune and the guardianship of his only child."

"Mr. Vernon met your brother—met you, as he supposed—and did all his letter had stated, and then went to the asylum. Your brother became master of Glen Idle, a magnificent estate, and guardian of Violet Vernon, then a maiden not yet in her teens."

"He placed you here, so as to preserve his secret, and all would have gone to his diabolical planning had he not believed that gold would buy any man, and got me to visit him at Glen Idle, where he quietly paid me money, for which I was to take your life, by slow poison, and then was to get rid of Mr. Vernon in the same way."

"I took the money, and, of course, it set me to thinking. I comprehended that you were the victim of a cruel wrong, so I at once determined to save you, and also to be just toward Mr. Vernon. The asylum where he then was caught fire and burned down, and it was I who brought him here."

"I discovered that a surgical operation would cure him, and sent for Doctor Carter, whom you saw here a few weeks ago, and Mr. Vernon is to-day a perfectly well man."

"More: he knows all, and is now waiting to see you, and when you are convinced that all I have told you is true, I have something more to say to you both. Come with me, please, to his rooms."

Dudley Norman was too amazed, too pained to speak; but not a word told to him by the nurse could he now doubt, and he went with Breton to meet the man whom he had last seen out on the frontier.

"Mr. Vernon, let me present Doctor Dudley Norman," said Breton, as the two entered the room.

"My God! can two beings be so alike in face and form, and yet so different in heart? Doctor Norman, you recall me, do you not?"

"Indeed, I do, sir, though you have aged since we passed a few weeks together in what you called Camp Samaritan," answered Norman, and their hands were clasped in true friendship.

"I regret that we meet again under such painful circumstances," said Vernon.

"It is sad, sir, but better so than that the guilty should prosper, for I believe you know all."

"Yes, al., and we owe it to our good friend Breton, here."

"We do owe him more than thanks can ever repay."

"Gentlemen, I assure you I have made a snug little sum out of the affair, for thus far he has paid me three thousand dollars—and I was to get two thousand more when you two gentlemen had departed this life through my work."

"To Doctor Carter I paid one thousand dollars, knowing that you would gladly do so, Mr. Vernon, and the balance, with my very liberal earnings, I now have."

"To Berry I have said nothing; nor will I; but I have a desire to track this whole affair out, and as you two gentlemen will now be company for each other, I will be my own detective and begin on the career of Mr. Randolph Norman, since he and his brother parted."

"When I have all proofs, I will place them in your hands, gentlemen, for you to act in the matter as you deem best. So now, sirs, what say you?"

They both agreed with Frederick Breton, and the next day he started on his work as his own detective.

Juniper Berry was installed as the attendant of both the "invalids," who were now allowed free access to each other's rooms, though Doctor Antisane was not made aware of the true state of affairs.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE LAST BLOW.

For three months was Breton absent—time enough to make his work as a detective most thorough.

He had gone to the old home of the Normans, and had made every discovery there that he sought.

He had gone to Baltimore, and his work in that city was to the point.

Of course he used the money unstintingly, which he had received as blood-money from Randolph Norman, and by its use was able to track the man, who was still dwelling in fancied security at Glen Idle, and prospering, as he supposed, in all his deviltry.

His marriage, his duel, and his gambling were all traced out; then the silent shadower went to Virginia.

Not a suspicion did he leave in Mrs. Carrol's mind, though he saw and had a talk with her.

He simply said that he came as Doctor Norman's friend, who meant to help her, and yet he begged her to say no word about it.

She wondered, yet promised.

He saw the Carrols' tomb, and he returned to New York to find out all else necessary to complete his case.

An adept at disguises, a half a dozen different times he went to Glen Idle, each time as a different person.

He had a talk with Pierre, as one who intended to establish a "Society of Butlers."

He interviewed Mrs. Scott as a book agent, and had a long talk with Jessie, Violet's maid, as a young man who was a devoted friend of her sailor brother, then at sea, and which fact Breton had most adroitly discovered.

He visited Glen Idle in the known absence of Randolph Norman, in the disguise of a clergyman, a friend of the Reverend Snow, of Virginia, who had buried the dead Carrols for two generations.

In his ingenious way he secured a number of important points from the unsuspecting Violet.

This was his last master-stroke, and then he returned to the Sanitarium with his data.

By registered letter to Dudley Norman he had sent all of his "notes," as he had called them, so that, upon his return, the two friends were wholly posted as to his movements.

When all was known, that Randolph

Norman deserved hanging there could be no question, even in the mind of his brother.

He certainly had slain Bennett Carrol, and that he was in some way implicated in the death of Kathleen they now firmly believed.

When all the facts were before the three, Walter Vernon said:

"Doctor Norman, you see for yourself this fiendish plot of which your brother has been guilty; but, for your sake, I do not wish to see him hanged, and I assure you that I believe our good friend here, Mr. Breton, will bear me out in saying, that, though we have the power to hang him, we had better let him go."

"My desire, then, is for you to visit him, not from here, but from some other place to which the three of us will go, and, telling him you know all, advise him to seek safety in immediate flight."

"Tell him to take what money he can lay his hands upon, and go, and to leave Violet to await your coming."

"What say you, Breton?"

"I will be guided wholly by you, sir, and for Doctor Norman's sake, I think it best."

"Thank you, Mr. Vernon; and you, too, Breton, for you are more than good to me in this," returned Dudley Norman, and his voice quivered with emotion.

Thus it was decided, and Mr. Vernon said:

"We have Doctor Carter's certificate of discharge, so we can go at once to New York, and you, Breton, can go on to Glen Idle to see what has been the result of Doctor Norman's letter."

"I can have a talk with my daughter and explain all, and it will not be my fault if happiness to us all does not follow all this plotting and unexampled villainy of this modern Lucifer."

The letter was written. It told the story of guilt, and was as follows:

"You played your game to win, and won, for you put me out of the way forever, as you believed; but, chance has helped me out of my living tomb, and in the hands of a detective are the papers which will put you in prison for your sin, and wrest from you the property you have so long controlled and the lovely girl you have taught to believe you were the legal guardian of and protector."

"But you are my brother, my twin brother, Randolph Norman, and I can not bear to see you suffer as I have, even though your crimes and perfidy deserve it, and I secretly write you, while the axe hangs over your head, this letter of warning, that you may fly far away beyond pursuit and arrest."

"Take what cash you yet may have in your possession, and go, leaving the home and little Violet to await my coming."

"Tell her what you will, as to your going, for I shall not contradict you, and let her know you to be the wicked man you are."

"But go; do not delay; and let me tell you, Randolph, if you ever cross my path again I will send you to prison, aye, to the gallows, for you well know that I can do so."

"Go and be warned."

"Your wronged brother,

"Dudley Norman."

Such was the letter that Randolph Norman read aloud, in the privacy of his elegant room.

It had come to him that day; he had found it upon his desk—brought by special messenger, the butler said—when he returned home from the races, where, as usual, he had bet heavily and recklessly, and also, as usual, had lost a considerable sum.

"Curses on him! How did he escape? But, he is free, that is certain, and he can send me to prison, perhaps worse, as his letter hints."

"I dare not delay; I must escape while I can; but, what ill luck it all is! At any other time I could have taken with me a

large sum of money; but now, those infernal races have nearly cleaned me of all my ready funds!"

"Let me see: I will write a check and send it down to the treasurer of the club and get it cashed to-night, for he often has cashed my checks, and can let me have a thousand, at least; and I guess I can raise as much more from my desk."

"But, I go not alone. Oh, no! They do not know me who would think so. Violet Vernon goes with me!" and he broke forth into a mocking laugh, such as Lucifer only might utter.

He sat down to his desk, and hastily wrote a check for a thousand dollars, and calling a servant said:

"Order the carriage at once for the station. Go to the club and get this check cashed for me; but be back by seven, for I must take the nine o'clock train to-night, as I am suddenly called away. Send the housekeeper to me."

The servant disappeared, and, a few moments after, a matronly looking personage entered the library.

"Mrs. Scott, I am going to take a trip to Canada, and I wish my ward to accompany me, so please get her ready at once, for I go by the nine o'clock train."

"This is sudden, is it not, sir?"

"Yes, quite so; but, Violet will only need one small trunk and heavy clothes; I will pack my own trunk myself; but pray tell my ward to be ready when I am."

"Yes, sir," and the surprised housekeeper retired.

A moment after a young girl of fourteen dashed into the room.

"Going away, Guardy, and going to take me, Mrs. Scott says?"

"Yes; so do not delay in getting ready, Vi."

"No, indeed! for I wish to go, so much!" and away she darted.

Then Randolph Norman set systematically to work to "pack up."

All his valuables he put away, and looking over his private desk, he found several rolls of money.

This done, he went to his bedroom and selected from his clothes what he would most need. His quick mind had already decided where he should go. And as the kidnapper of Violet Vernon, the little heiress, he well realized that he would be a fugitive from justice, and if tracked would suffer for more than the crime of running off with the child.

A couple of hours passed. The servant had returned from town with the money, and the nine o'clock train carried with it Randolph Norman and Violet Vernon.

Usurper, fearing the brand of crime, he had heeded his twin brother's warning, and escaped; but had now added to his sum of crimes the heinous offense of kidnapping the little heiress of the great Vernon estates.

CHAPTER LVII.

BY AN ACCIDENT.

There was an accident on the railroad, and up-going and down-going trains on the Hudson River road were detained.

There had been a death at the Military Academy, and the young cadet was to be sent home for burial.

A "Guard of Honor" was with the body, and one of the number was Duke Sanford.

When the accident occurred he walked down to the wreck.

There was a train in front of his, detained, and going through it he heard his name called.

"Why, Violet! and Doctor Norman!" he cried.

They explained that they were going north, to Canada, when the cadet officer in charge of the guard of honor entered and called out:

"Cadet Sanford!"

"Yes, sir!" and Duke Sanford was all attention.

"Go forward and see, if you can, how long this is likely to delay us, for if until

morning, I must go back to the station and telegraph the commandant."

Duke said hastily to Violet that he would see her on his return and departed.

He reached the wreck, and the conductor told him it would be an hour before the up train could go, on the right-hand track, but much longer before the down train could go through.

As he turned he suddenly saw a gentleman near him.

"Why, Doctor Norman, how did you get here so soon, when I just left you yonder, in the train, on the side track, and I certainly hurried?"

"My dear young friend, you call me by name, and yet I do not recall you."

"Not know me? Why, doctor, I just left you and Violet, and—"

The man he addressed started, turned pale, and called to two gentlemen who stood near.

Duke was turning away, when the gentleman placed his hand upon his arm.

"My dear sir, did you ever hear that Doctor Dudley Norman had a twin brother?"

"No, sir."

"Well, he has, and I am that brother. Your name, please?"

"Duke Sanford, cadet at United States Military Academy, sir."

The three gentlemen looked at each other.

"Ah! you are Cadet Duke Sanford, then? Well, we have heard of you, sir, and that you twice saved Miss Violet Vernon from being kidnapped. Now, Cadet Sanford, you say you met my brother in the train on the side track?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Violet is with him?"

"Yes sir. I am one of a guard of honor to a dead cadet comrade, and passing through the trains, I met them. They are on their way to Canada."

Again the three gentlemen looked at each other, and then the one who had formerly spoken said:

"Cadet Sanford, I wish you to do me a favor, but I cannot explain now, more than to say that this gentleman is the father of Miss Violet Vernon, and is on his way to visit her."

"Pray go back to the train and simply say to Mr. Norman that Miss Violet's father is here, a passenger on the down train, and with him is his brother and a detective."

"Tell Miss Violet that her father is on his way to visit her at Glen Idle, and wishes you to bring her to him."

"And Doctor Norman, sir?"

"He will not care to come," was the significant reply.

"I will do so, sir, if I may first report to my officer."

"Certainly."

The cadet departed, now filled with astonishment and anxiety.

He proceeded to his officer with his report, and was told that they would wait and go through.

Then he returned to Violet and her guardian.

"Doctor Norman, I met three gentlemen just now, and one I mistook for you, while another said he was Miss Violet's father and on his way to see her, with your twin brother and a detective, and he begged me to escort your ward to them."

The cadet saw the face of the man he addressed turn of an ashen hue, saw him spring to his feet, and heard the trembling words:

"Yes, yes, my brother—your father—go with him, Violet, and I will follow presently."

Violet went with the cadet, but Randolph Norman did not follow!

The up train found a way sooner than was expected, and he went with it, and Duke Sanford rode on the same train to New York with Violet, her father, and the man who should have been her guardian.

He was asked to stop the next day at Glen Idle, and got permission to do so.

Then he heard the story which Violet

already knew, and, as they talked over the strange career of Randolph Norman, a telegram came, telling of his death in a railway accident.

"It is better so," said Dudley Norman.

CHAPTER LVIII.

CONCLUSION.

A well man once more, Walter Vernon resumed full possession of his estate, while Doctor Dudley Norman settled in the neighborhood to practice his profession, and the people found him to be a very different personage from his twin brother, of whose violent death they had all heard.

A month after the return of Walter Vernon to his home, a veiled lady appeared there, one day. She had a wonderful story to reveal.

It was Kathleen Norman! She told how she had been kidnapped by the Sea Gypsies, but not killed, and had been held by them a prisoner on their vessel, to in the end be used to extort from Randolph Norman a large sum of money, for her captors.

They had used another body with her clothing and wedding ring, to impose on Randolph, and so had obtained a considerable sum from him.

But, she had been well treated, and when Soto had seen an account of Norman's death by the railroad accident, he had at once released her, under pledge that the Sea Gypsies should not be prosecuted. In their schooner they had sailed for other lands, while she had returned to Glen Idle.

Can words describe the joy of Violet at the return of her governess, who was to resume her duties as such, as soon as she had returned home to visit her mother?

Thither Mr. Vernon went, with them, and the result of his visit to Rose Hill was that, six months after, he became the stepfather of Kathleen!

Nor was this all; for, in time, Dudley Norman offered his heart and hand to Kathleen, and she became his wife, and a noble husband he made her.

Frederick Breton decided that he would open a detective agency in New York. Mr. Vernon set him up in business, and he became famous as a secret service expert, and, as if to make the romance more romantic, Jessie, Violet's maid, was won over into becoming Mrs. Fred Breton.

Cadet Duke Sanford graduated with the first honors of his class, and, years after, when he had won rank and fame, he offered his heart and hand to Violet Vernon, the belle and heiress.

That they were wed, and were happy beyond all words to express in that consummation of affection, is the climax to a history of human experience whose record reads like some weird dream.

THE END.